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The Daily Selection



**Copenhagen  
Business School**  
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

# The Daily Selection

**Else Skjold**



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# THE DAILY SELECTION

by Else Skjold



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Design School Kolding and Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies at  
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## Foreword

As is the case with many other PhD projects, this has been a long journey. To explain where the journey ended, it might be important to mention, first, that the scholarly disciplines I have been engaged with in my thesis reflect, in many ways, the institutions that I have been affiliated with. Starting out with the humanities, in the form of a BA in musicology and an MA in Culture and Communication from Copenhagen University, I have been influenced by these disciplines in the way that I understand how socio-cultural structures are formed and developed. With this post-constructionist view in my backpack, there are certain issues that I continue to see from the vantage point of a humanistic and cultural studies perspective. Second, I have been affected in my work by the fact that after earning my MA degree, I worked for a couple of years as a fashion journalist, and in this way, I came to learn a great deal about the fashion industry from within. Third, I was employed at Design School Kolding to make a report on the academisation process that was taking place during the 2000s, and its possible impact, potentials and limitations, on the department of fashion at the school. Out of this came my report, *Fashion Research at Design Schools* (Skjold 2008), which has coloured my view on the connection between the production and the consumption of dress objects that I am engaged with in this thesis. Being affiliated with Design School Kolding has also had an enormous impact on the whole way that I approach fashion and dress research, in the sense that I draw on methods, theoretical implications and discussions stemming from design research. Fourth, my PhD scholarship is funded by a co-financing between Design School Kolding and Copenhagen Business School. This means that in the period from 2008-12, I was situated partly in the programme, *Creative Encounters: the socio-economic organization of creative industries*, which was funded by the Danish Strategic Research council and headed up by Professor Brian Moeran. It was mainly in extension of which I experienced in this programme that I decided to study male 'free agents' from the creative industry as my sample, and to engage actively with industry practices. Most importantly, it was also here that I decided to work with 'the wardrobe method'. Throughout most of the period of my PhD fellowship, I have had the associate professor at Copenhagen Business School, PhD Lise Skov, as my main supervisor. As she was head of the thread of fashion, as part of the Creative Encounters programme, she framed and initiated the wardrobe network, of which I was an active participant, in the period of

2007-12. In this network, I have met people that I feel a very close kinship with in my research. This is particularly true of my contact with individuals like the associate professor, PhD Ingun Klepp, from SIFO in Norway, Professor emeritus at Northwestern University in Chicago, Karen Tranberg Hansen, Doctor Kate Fletcher from London College of Fashion; and PhD Philip Warkander from Stockholm University. I wish to thank them all for their inspiration and for the thoughts they have expressed in response to my work. I also need to thank Lise Skov for daring to take me on as a PhD fellow, since it is mainly because of her confidence in what I was doing that I have been able to create the present thesis. Lise Skov has opened doors of understanding and reflection for me that will always be part of my work, and I thank her deeply for this. I would also like to thank my colleague, Ulla Ræbild, who, back in 2006, hired me to work at Design School Kolding. Together, we travelled to New York, Amsterdam and London to visit design schools and to discuss how they combined academia and design practice within the area of fashion and dress. We have not ended this discussion yet, and I hope we never will. During the compiling of the report, I was fortunate enough to meet the head of the menswear department at the Royal College of Art in London, Ike Rust, whom I thank for his attention to humour, beauty, and cleverness. I also wish to thank my empathic and patient bosses, who have continued to support me all along the way. Here, I am thinking particularly of Mathilde Aggebo, former head of the Product Department at Design School Kolding, and rector Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen. At Copenhagen Business School, I need to thank the head of ICM, Dorthe Salskov-Iversen, who agreed to go 'the whole way' for me, at a time when I had almost given up. Also in this process, I can never adequately express the extent of my gratitude to the PhD coordinators at my doctoral school, Hans Krause Hansen, and later on, Wencke Gwozdz. To all of you, I can say that you may have only been doing your jobs, but you did them very well! I want to thank my external secondary supervisor, associate professor and PhD Thomas Binder, from the School of Design at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, for helping me find my own voice - and my main supervisor, Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen, for stepping in to perform a last minute rescue. Then there are my close colleagues who continue to help, inspire, and amuse. From Design School Kolding: Anne Louise Bang, Vibeke Riisberg, Helle Graabæk and the whole research department. From Copenhagen Business School: Frederik Larsen, Janne Meier, Jacob Ion Wille, Ana Alacovska, Nina Poulsen, Fabian Csaba, and Brian Moeran, and admin coordinator at ICM, Lise Søstrøm, who has always taken good care of me. Last but not least, I want to thank my people at home, Jon and Ada.

## ENGLISH ABSTRACT

In this PhD thesis, *The Daily Selection*, I will be addressing the overall question of how research on wardrobes can contribute to a more effective connection between the production and the consumption of dress objects. The thesis builds on exemplary studies of people in their wardrobes, with the aim of focusing on theoretical and methodological concerns and implications. It is structured in three parts, each of which consists - independently - of its own introductory framing, its own literature review, its own methods chapter, its own field work study, and its own conclusive reflections. As such, the parts, when taken as a whole, represent an evolving process through which my overall research questions are being filtered and reflected. My scholarly approach builds on the fusing of fashion and dress research and design research, in this way closing a gap between dress practice as, on the one hand, symbolic discourse and, on the other, as an embodied practice that is 'physically embedded' in the material capacities of dress objects. In Part I, I frame this view by addressing the concept of dressing as a 'bodily situated practice', as defined by Entwistle (2000), combined with a processual view on design and everyday practices, as defined by Shove et al. (2008). Based on these perspectives, I contribute with my own explanatory frameworks of 'sartorial systems' and 'sensory anchoring', on which I base the entire thesis. In order to operationalise these frameworks in my field work, I have developed a personal methodology for the wardrobe method that embraces the sensory and temporal aspects of dress practice. In Part II, I filter this through the vehicle of a collaborative project with Danish designer Mads Nørgaard, wherein I observe how dress objects from Nørgaard's collection are appropriated and used in the wardrobes of informants. In this way, I point to discrepancies between the production and the dissemination of dress objects that take place in the fashion industry, and to the ways that people use and experience these objects in their everyday lives. In Part III, I conduct a series of 'wardrobe sessions' with informants in collaboration with a designer, in order to explore how use practice might cast reflections back onto design processes. In my concluding chapter, I argue that my thesis contributes with a more faceted and reflected set of thinking in relation to dress practice, and that this way of thinking could potentially bring about radical changes in the way dress objects are currently produced, disseminated and sold. All together, this thesis shows that in order to establish a more tight fit between the production and consumption of dress objects, there is very good reason to look into the dress practices that are taking place in people's wardrobes.



## DANSK RESUMÉ

Denne Ph.d.-afhandling, 'Det daglige valg', handler om hvordan forskning i garderober kan bidrage med en bedre forbindelse mellem produktion og forbrug af beklædningsobjekter. Afhandlingen bygger på eksemplariske studier af informanter og deres garderober, med en målsætning om at fokusere på de metodiske og teoretiske implikationer af sådanne studier. Den har en tredelt struktur, hvor hver del har sin egen introduktion, literaturgennemgang, metodedel, feltarbejde, og konkluderende refleksioner. Som sådan repræsenterer delene i samlet form en rullende proces gennem hvilken mine grundlæggende forskningsspørgsmål filtreres og reflekteres. Min forskningsmæssige tilgang bygger på en kombination af mode- og beklædningsforskning og designforskning, og jeg søger på denne måde at lukke nogle gab mellem beklædningspraksis som 'symbolsk diskurs' på den ene side, og på den anden side som en kropslig praksis der er indlejret i beklædningsobjekternes fysiske materialitet. I del I udbygger jeg dette syn ved at kombinere Joanne Entwistle's syn på beklædningspraksis som 'kropsligt forankret' (Entwistle 2000), med Shove og andres syn på design og hverdagspraksis som processuelt (Shove m. fl. 2008). Med udgangspunkt i dette bidrager jeg med to forståelsesmodeller, nemlig 'beklædningsystemer' og 'sensorisk forankring', ud fra hvilke jeg har opbygget hele afhandlingen. For at operationalisere disse modeller i mit feltarbejde har jeg udviklet en særlig metodologi i forhold til forskning i garderober der indbefatter både det sensoriske og temporale aspekt af beklædningspraksis. I del II filtreres dette syn gennem et samarbejde med den danske designer Mads Nørgaard, hvor jeg observerer hvorledes beklædningsdesign fra Mads Nørgaard's kollektioner approprieres og bruges i mine informanternes garderober. På den måde identificerer jeg et misforhold mellem produktion og disseminering af beklædning som den finder sted i modebranchen på den ene side, og på den anden side hvordan beklædning bruges og opleves i garderoben. I del III foretager jeg en række garderobeundersøgelser i samarbejde med en designer, med det formål at udforske hvordan beklædningspraksis kan kaste refleksioner tilbage på designprocesser. Endelig konkluderer jeg hvordan afhandlingen bidrager med et mere facetteret og reflekteret syn på beklædningspraksis end det nuværende, og hvordan dette syn potentielt kan være med til at skabe radiale forandringer i den måde beklædning for indenværende er produceret, dissemineret, og solgt. Alt i alt viser afhandlingen, at for at skabe en tættere forbindelse mellem produktion og forbrug af beklædning er der en yderst god grund til at studere beklædningspraksisser i garderoben.





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## **Introduction**

How do people select what to wear? Every morning, we all get to make decisions about our appearance. In this thesis, I wish to explore deeper on what grounds we base these decisions. How people structure guidelines and 'rules' for themselves, in their efforts to manage their daily dressing routines. This issue is heavily under-researched. This has, first of all, to do with the fact that most research on fashion and dress has been divided into, on the one hand, research on fashion as system and cultural (Western) phenomenon and, on the other, ethnographic encounters with non-Westerners and what they wear. Of course, this is a rough way of outlining what's happening in the terrain of research, but still, there is a substantial gap situated between these respective fields of scholarly exploration that has been given very little attention so far, which has to do with people's everyday lives with dress objects, and the ways that they develop their personal dress styles over time: the everyday routines, in which they manage their appearance.

Basing my thesis on the so-called 'wardrobe method', I wish to point my finger at this scholarly gap, and establish a more faceted and reflected understanding of how these processes take place. Why is it so interesting to study people's wardrobes? Because the wardrobe is the site where people connect their most personal, intimate ideas of self with societal ideas of appropriateness and behaviour that stem from socio-economic structures that surround them. I am not the first to study people in their wardrobes, even if the area has only started to interest scholars within recent decades. However, I do find that there are large explanatory gaps on the issue of people's everyday dress practices within research on fashion and dress. I have therefore had, as my central research objective, the aim of setting up alternative explanatory frameworks around these practices, in order to better understand how people make their daily selection in the wardrobe. Because I have viewed these frameworks as potentially turning the logics driving the fashion industry and the way that fashion designers are educated upside-down, I have filtered them through industry- and design-practices in two of the larger sections of my thesis. With this, I have been aiming towards posing questions about the way that dress objects are currently produced, disseminated, and sold, which I see as

not necessarily correlative with the way these dress objects are used in people's homes. In other words, through exploring how people actually interact with dress objects, I am questioning the lack of coherence between the production and consumption of dress objects as it takes place today.

I have found substantial opaque areas in the terrain of research on these matters. In particular, there is little discussion about how people develop personal taste patterns throughout their lives that make them become especially attached to certain dress objects, while others hang passively inside their wardrobes. While scholars such as Ingun Klepp (2001/2010) and Kate Fletcher (2008/2014) have started to map out these mechanisms, I have found that there is actually a considerable body of literature on the matter available within the field of design research. The problem is, however, that this literature is not related to dress objects, but to industrial design or product design. However, since I basically consider clothing and dress practice as constituting an aggregation of design objects, what certainly makes sense to me is the impetus to explore my research objectives through engaging with this body of knowledge. This has been my personal departure and approach, through which I have tried to cast some light on sensory and temporal aspects of dress practice which I have found to be missing in the scholarly research on fashion and dress. In the following, I have separated the two distinctions of 'fashion' and 'dress' in order to more effectively explain what I find to be missing here, before I launch into explaining what I found to be more appropriate, and how I might go about suggesting alternatives.

First of all, in much of the research on fashion, the explanatory framework for dress practice seems to me to be far too simplistic. Largely, the reigning assumption here appears to be that all dress practice can be explained through concepts such as fashion and anti-fashion, and besides this dichotomy, there is also *the unfashionable* (i.e. Church-Gibson 2000; Lipovetysky 1994). This places the dress practice of the vast majority of the world's population as being inferior and indifferent. Throughout the thesis, I will argue repeatedly that this gap could be avoided by viewing people's dress practice, instead, through the concept of *dress style*, understood here as an all-encompassing framework under which is placed a set of available cultural scripts such as fashion. This leads me toward making an inquiry into how the concept of 'fashion' has come to form the explanatory framework for dress practice at large. My objection to this is that, in fact, the logics of 'fashion' can help to explain only a distinct set of skills, codes and practices, which have been developed in Europe – and later in the United States -

because of particular socio-economic developments that have been transpiring in those particular locations. As Rocamora (2009), I see both imagery and the rhetoric of fashion as still being deeply influenced by the legacy of Paris, and thereby all who engage in fashion thereby inscribe themselves into an inherently French 'fashion discourse' consisting of fashion commodities, practices, agencies, and the physical space and history of Paris itself. Ever since the 'birth' of fashion, which is generally regarded as having taken place at the Burgundian courts in the 14th Century, a naturalisation of Paris as the epicentre of fashion has been perpetuated, even if new fashion 'clusters' have been evolving throughout the course of the 20th Century. All this means that the concept of fashion is, inevitably, tied closely together with the idea of the French, elegant woman, such as the *courtisanes* and *grand dames*, to 'la passante' (Baudelaire 1860 in: Rocamora 2009) and the 'Parisian chic'. Moeran has further highlighted how such ideas are still being reproduced in some of the most important and dominant fashion magazines of the world, insofar as the practices around these magazines are still based on classical sociological divides between genders deriving from 19th Century Paris (Moeran 2008). All of this gives rise, in my view, to a lack of diversity which limits the explanatory potential of the whole concept of 'fashion'. There are approximately 7 billion people in the world, and surely they cannot all be occupied with matters of (Western) fashion while they are getting dressed.

Another thorny problem is the fact that 'fashion' is based on the values of change and newness, as most scholars working within the area would seem to agree upon. Ever since the 14th Century, the dissemination of new fashions has increased. As already stated by Simmel, it is inherent in the nature of fashion that it is being disseminated from fashion 'leaders', and that it emanates outwards and downwards (Simmel 1905 in: Carter 2003). The production and consumption of fashion was already, at this point in time, a marker of status not only for the individual, but also for regions, their governmental institutions, and the respective industries. Still today, regardless of whether new fashions or trends 'trickle down' (Veblen 1899), 'bubble up' (Polhemus 1997), or 'trickle across' (Blumer 1986 [1969]), they always have a centre, and a periphery. Some take the lead, others follow. In this way, the concept of fashion is inevitably tied together with Western ideals about democracy and change in the very best, positivist sense, where all progress is good. Accordingly, it is no wonder that fashion has come to be such a dominant 'system', where the values and morals of society are displayed through imagery, design, institutionalised rituals like fashion weeks and fashion shows, embodied practices of posing, moving and gesturing in certain manners,



and the operational behaviour of the fashion industry itself. All which, when taken together, frame and form the 'fashion system', as it has been defined by Barthes (1983), and later on, by Kawamura (2005). What particularly Kawamura highlights is that fashion is not only about dress: it is, in point of fact, 'intangible' and functions as societal driver for an extensive assortment of areas such as food, architecture, politics, even academia. As such, fashion is not just about dress: it is a set of values, codes and practices through which we think and behave as modern, Western people. To my mind, there is nothing 'wrong' with this explanatory framework, in itself. It explains perfectly well the cultural mechanisms that drive a lot of behaviours that have to do with dress practice. Consequently, I fully acknowledge the system of fashion as being a highly dominant cultural script. My claim is, however, that it is not the only cultural script at play in people's dress practice. This is a view that I have built on the fact that all trends and fashion derive from some kind of centre. Someone starts wearing something, and others find it to be fetching and attractive and follow along. What I wish to address in this thesis are these *others*, who are inevitably: most people. Inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's distinction between 'man' and his female 'other' (Beauvoir 1989), it is all of the people who are *not* fashion leaders, who follow trends and fashions at what is sometimes a very remote distance, and who are, all in all, indifferent to the whole charade of fashionability, whom I see as fashion's 'others'. Standing in the periphery of trends and fashions that are initiated by fashion leaders, what such people do is to accommodate and appropriate, and make their own logics of dressing. It is these practices that I wish to explore further, and this is why I propose to look more deeply into the concept of style: the logics of fashion are about what happens in the epicentre of new trends, while the logics of style are about what happens, as people appropriate only some of these trends and convey them into their own logics of dressing. It is the latter mechanism that I find interesting.

As I started out saying, research on fashion and dress seems to move, roughly speaking, into two, overall fields; on the one hand, the field of so-called 'fashion studies', which explores fashion with a capital 'F'; and, on the other hand, there are museologist and anthropological approaches that explore the use and materiality of dress objects, often in a non-Western context. Eicher and Roach-Higgins position themselves here in the sense that they challenge a Eurocentric explanation of dress practices formed by 'fashion'. As an opposition to this, the framework they have formed with their term, 'dress', is wide-ranging. As I see it, it invites tenders on new explanations of dress practice that address, in more universal way, what we wear – or at least in a more

faceted and reflected way than what the limitations lying within the concept of fashion allow for. As such, their definition of the term is open and inviting on purpose: 'dress of an individual is an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body' (Eicher & Roach-Higgins 1992, in: Johnson and Foster 2007). In this way, the concept of 'dress' opens up for alternative perspectives on dressing that are not influenced by Western fashion only, but rather by all kinds of cultural scripts surrounding the wearer. Therefore, to widen the scope of how dress practices can be understood, I have chosen to define what people wear as their *dress style*. Accordingly, I believe there is room to encompass all of the aspects and cultural scripts affecting the informants whom I have studied.

What I wish to achieve in this thesis is to form an alternative understanding of dress practice that can amalgamate these two concepts, and that can also 'catch up' on some of the aspects that fall in between them. As such, I am not really opposing or challenging the concept of 'fashion'. Nor am I voicing any objection to ethnographic approaches to 'dress'. My main agenda is to show that both concepts play a role in the multi-faceted richness of people's dress style. And I also want to show how a widening of the scope of these matters can place a question mark beside current industry- and educational-practices of fashion.

### *Explanatory framework*

What I have done in this thesis is to study people in their wardrobes through developing two explanatory models, which I believe can open up this debate more widely. The first model of 'sartorial systems' has been developed on the aforementioned reflections on 'fashion' as a highly important albeit limited concept. By way of alternative, I propose the idea of viewing 'fashion' as a cultural script alongside others, which affect how we dress in our everyday lives. Seeing fashion as a very distinct 'sartorial system', with its own, distinguishable and ritualised skills, codes and practices here paves the way for an understanding that embraces other 'sartorial systems' as well. By looking deeply into the practices of my informants in their wardrobes, and by qualifying this through similar studies and readings, I venture to suggest that systems such as 'pop- and counter-culture', 'menswear/tailoring', and 'sportswear' are driven by skills, codes and practices that are essentially different than those that drive the system of 'fashion'. Some of these

systems correspond much more with the concept of 'style', as it has been defined by Barthes (2006). Barthes argues that opposed to 'fashion', style operates in much slower cycles of change. One might say even that it is actually driven by the virtue of stability (even if this stability can be adjusted slightly, from time to time). With this, I am referring to the way people's dress practice is maintained and adjusted through re-enacting and reproducing the skills, codes and practices of the 'sartorial systems' around dressing that are available to them.

As such, I see my model of 'sartorial systems' as being aligned with the 'Copernican revolution' suggested by Busch. In his article, "Revisiting Affirmative Design" (2009), Busch opposes the way that the scholarly field of fashion has abstained from taking any part in critical discussions about design. What this implicates is how the whole concept of fashion stands as being highly closed around itself, and as such, it is detached from actual consumer practices. In Busch's mind, this is what prevents the fashion industry from connecting more closely with consumers through design for 'long loving commitment': design objects that are produced from the very outset to be altered, mended, adjusted, shared and leased between consumers. What Busch proposes is a more flat and democratic structure that adopts the open-source approach of computer games and social media, or the ideals of co-creation from participatory design. In other words, he wishes to position consumer practices centrally, and to see 'fashion' in the periphery, instead of taking the more traditional approach where 'fashion' is always in the centre and emanates outwards. It is this view that I have engaged with, and this is why I propose to look closer into people's personal 'dress style', as a kind of umbrella concept under which lies a set of 'sartorial systems', each one representing its own distinct skills, codes and practices.

While the dress practices of my informants are driven forward by the way they navigate through - and manage - the various 'sartorial systems' available to them, they are also deeply affected by their sensory systems. That is to say, by the way that certain dress objects feel 'wrong' to wear, while others feel 'right'. As a second explanatory framework, I have suggested that my model of 'sensory anchoring' might help explain how people make these decisions, which are often more or less non-reflected, and based on previous, embodied experience. What is important here is that these practices take place through time and space. When people make decisions in their wardrobes, it seems, from what I've learned from my own study and similar ones, that they do so in a way that is based on past, present and future ideas of who they are. In this way, past

wardrobes, in the shape of individual dress objects, can define what feels 'wrong' or 'right' throughout an entire lifetime of dressing. This is where the so-called 'wardrobe method' becomes relevant, because it is in the wardrobe that people store and keep old and new objects. The temporal aspect of my 'sensory anchoring' model is important, because it is linked with people's on-going practices, which, in the course of time, turn into habits and routines of dressing that are often un-reflected, bodily sensations of feeling 'right' or 'wrong': judgements that are based on past and present experiences of dressing, and reflections on future practices that relate to ideas of self.

Throughout this thesis, it is these two models that form my approach to my theoretical reflections, as well as to my overall methodology and field work. Below, I will briefly sketch out the theoretical departure from which they have emerged, while further elaboration on this matter will be presented continuously throughout the thesis, and particularly in the introductory section of part I.

To be able to frame my two explanatory models of 'sartorial systems' and 'sensory anchoring', my personal contribution to the wardrobe method is conjoined with a distinctive combination of Entwistle's concept of dressing as a 'bodily situated practice' (Entwistle 2000), and Shove et al.'s processual view on the connection between design and everyday life (Shove et al. 2007). Entwistle's concept of dressing as a 'bodily situated practice' derives from fashion and dress research. Within this area of research, Eicher in particular has pursued the sensory experiences of dressing, as she talks about the importance of including all five senses in scholarly approaches to dressing; not only sight, but also touch, smell, hearing and taste (Eicher et al. 2000 [1973], in: Johnson and Foster 2007). Even though I fully appreciate the richness of her 'five-senses' approach, I still find it more appropriate, in this context, to subscribe wholeheartedly to the one put forth by Entwistle. Alongside the scholarly contribution of a writer like Craik (1994), Entwistle places the body as the connecting node between culture and individual negotiations of appearance. As such, she reduces a view of dress practice that is merely linked to sign-making, and places it closer to the whole way that people experience their being in the (physical) world. Since I regard dress practice as being situated not only in the body, but also in place and time, I have combined the view of Entwistle with Shove et al.'s view on everyday practices deriving from design research. Together, they effectively express my ontology. Beneath my overall view on these issues lies Ingold's definition of 'dwelling', which posits that people are themselves part of the physical world, and that they do not stand outside of it (Ingold 2000/2004/2008). This

implicates that design objects are not merely 'instruments' to use for various purposes, but are rather *extensions of self*, through which we experience the world. Furthermore, Ingold emphasises that this interaction is not frozen in time. It is processual, and takes place in on-going movements of interaction. What I might have done was to pursue Ingold's extensive ideas of 'dwelling' throughout my wardrobe research. However, I found that this might very well have led me astray from what I was actually interested in from the outset, inasmuch as Ingold's main agenda is preoccupied with the Cartesian decoupling of body and mind that have been perceived as a civilised approach throughout the past few centuries of Western history. A deep focusing on such an agenda would, in my mind, diffuse my interest in people's dress practices, and in the way they develop their personal dress style.

### *Engaging with design research*

Shove et al.'s reading of design and everyday practices leads me to Taylor and her call for more object-based approaches in fashion and dress research, which she believes might close the gap between, on the one hand, research on fashion and, on the other, anthropological and museological approaches. However, when Taylor writes about dress as objects, there is an immanent understanding of objects as museum artefacts, or as ethnological objects of study, which situates this particular term in the latter fields of research (Taylor 2002). In order to explore the gap lying between these fields, and in order to position my research as a possible way of bridging disciplinary trenches and moving forward, I have shaped my understanding of object-based dress research through the rapidly developing field of design research. I position my own research in this field through the framework of Frankel & Racine (2010), who divide design research into three overall approaches:

- '*clinical*' research or '*research for design*', which address 'design problems that are specific and individual cases requiring information for that unique situation'

- '*applied research*' or '*research through design*', which address 'general classes of design problems or products' [that] 'often generate the kind of knowledge that designers can apply in their clinical research'

-'basic research' or 'research about design', which focus 'on the empirical examination of fundamental principles [which] lead to developing theories about design that [have] far-reaching implications for the discipline'

(ibid: 3-8)

I inscribe my research in the framework of 'basic research', seeing that Frankel and Racine call attention to the fact that much of this research is being conducted under the banner of other disciplines, and further that it addresses what Buchanan calls 'design inquiry', which is in search of 'an explanation in the experience of designers and those who use products' (Buchanan 2007:58, in ibid:7), and which produces theory as output. As such, this project is aimed at forming theoretical concepts, analyses and perspectives, which inform both a designerly and a scholarly perspective.

Underneath this, I am also building on elements from 'applied research', since this includes the field of 'participatory design'. Within this line of research, as it has been defined by Frankel & Racine, I subscribe to Sanders & Stappers' definition of co-design as 'human-centred' design research, because it evolves around the way people interact emotionally with design objects. These scholars perceives an informant as an 'expert of his/her experience', and not merely as a 'passive [object] of study' (Sanders & Stappers 2008:8), because they build on a Scandinavian, 'democratic' approach to user-centred research, which regards the studied subjects as creative 'partners'. In a co-design project, such 'partners' would be part of the creative process of generating design ideas, prototypes, and work processes, based on their own experiences, dreams, or motives. This research project is not a co-design project, but I do see myself as studying people's 'feelings, pleasure, value and dreams' in their interaction with dress objects. By using the term, *dress object*, instead of words like 'clothing', 'fashion clothing', 'apparel', 'garment', 'attire', 'costume', or 'outfit', I have made an attempt to amalgamate the term, 'Dress', with the term, 'design object'. By using the word, 'object', instead of, for example, 'product' or 'artefact', I place my focus on the material capacities of the object, such as colour, shape, texture, fabric, or surface. In this way, I aim to strengthen my 'design inquiry' by focusing on the design qualities of a given dress object, and on how these qualities play a role in the way the given dress object is perceived and appropriated in the wardrobe by its wearer.

To synthesise here, my aim in this thesis is to explore more deeply the interrelation between wearer and dress objects, as it transpires in daily practices in the wardrobe.

Through my explanatory frameworks of 'sartorial systems' and 'sensory anchoring', I wish to shake up general notions about 'fashion' and their connection to dress practice, and to filter this approach through the practices of fashion itself. I will do so by suggesting a 'Copernican turn' that places the emphasis of research not on fashion, or on fashion leaders, but on all the followers who accommodate and appropriate cultural scripts for dressing (such as 'fashion') into their own personal dress styles. As such, the following overall research question is what I aim to answer:

RQ "How might the wardrobe method contribute to a deeper understanding of dress practice, and contribute towards bringing about a more 'tight fit' between the production and consumption of dress objects?"

### *Structure and overall approach*

As can be read in the above text, this thesis constitutes a hybrid study. I have found this to be necessary in order to find my own path through the three large fields of research that I have been engaged with here. This manoeuvre has made it possible for me to write up a contribution that is deeply engaged with important discussions going on in each of these research fields. However, at the same time, I have found it necessary at times to free myself from these discussions, in order to adhere closely to my stated objectives. In this way, I escape the safety and potency afforded by standing in a firmly grounded way in a single field and speaking from there, and I am sure this implicates a risk of approaching each discussion too superficially. However, I still consider myself to be a scholar of fashion and dress research, even though after all this, I'm not sure what the appropriate label for my research is going to be: perhaps, *a scholar of dress style*. I will leave it up to my readers to make such judgements. Hopefully, the flirtatious nature of my thesis will find its own sense of direction through my overall ontology, and will come to permeate my epistemological standpoint. Through my ontology, I situate myself between a subjectivist and an objectivist standpoint of sociology. On the one hand, my 'sartorial systems' model brings me close to an epistemological aim of understanding patterns of symbolic discourse, in the sense that

*"The social world is a pattern of symbolic relationships and meanings sustained through a process of human action and interaction. Although a certain degree of continuity is*

*preserved through the operation of rule-like activities that define a particular social milieu, the pattern is always open to reaffirmation or change through the interpretations and actions of individual members. The fundamental character of the social world is embedded in the network of subjective meanings that sustain the rule-like actions that lend it enduring form. Reality rests not in the rule or in rule-following, but in the system of meaningful action that renders itself to an external observer as rule-like"*

(Morgan & Smircich 1980:494)

This view is essential to my approach to my informant's management of appearance. The space of the wardrobe stands here as the site where symbolic discourses are being managed, re-enacted and appropriated by the wearer. Simultaneously, my sartorial systems model is seen through this definition of the 'system of meaningful action' that appears rule-like, and is sustained through various practices surrounding dressing.

On the other hand, my ontology brings me close to an objectivist, realist approach such as that of Schwandt, who proposes that:

*"Scientific realism is the view that theories refer to real features of the world. 'Reality' here refers to whatever it is in the universe (i.e., forces, structures, and so on) that causes the phenomena we perceive with our senses"*

(Schwandt 1997:133 in: Maxwell 2012)

Only, as Ingold does - through his concept of 'dwelling', I include with these 'phenomena we perceive with our senses' our own bodies, since they are also 'real features of the world'. What I see in my studies of people in their wardrobes is that they engage not only with dress objects as artefacts that they make use of in order to establish symbolic meaning, but they also engage with them as *felt* and *sensed* material extensions of this meaning. As such, just like Entwistle, I subscribe to a bridging of the symbolic discourse, on the one hand, and a sociology of the body, on the other.

In order to answer my overall research question, I have divided the thesis up into three parts, each of which constitutes a unity of understanding: each part has a contextualisation and a literature review, an individual research question, a methods chapter, a field work chapter, and a concluding chapter. In this way, the thesis as a whole represents a rolling process, in which the overall structuring ideas are reflected and put into perspective through a set of related questions. It is important to notice here



that I have been making use, all the way through the thesis, of exemplary studies of informants. I have seen this as a necessary step towards being able to look deeply into their practices, and into the way that they can be connected to production. So, even if I have a rather homogeneous sample, I make no claim that this is a representative study, as such. However, the homogeneity of the sample has made it possible for me to understand patterns of dress practice in a better way. Keeping this part of the research very simple and at a minimum, I have felt that it has been more feasible and possible to target my actual research objectives.

In part I, I establish the basic understandings and methodology of the entire thesis. In the literature review, I elaborate further the ideas behind my explanatory frameworks, 'sartorial systems' and 'sensory anchoring'. I explain how I see them as being connected to research on wardrobes, and to the so-called 'wardrobe method' that I am engaged with. In my methods chapter, I elaborate on how I have combined applied methods from anthropology and design research and ended up with a method that I define as 'clustering': basically, this method has to do with bringing in sorting processes as part of the interview session, in order to help in addressing sensory aspects of dressing, as well as symbolic ones. I further elaborate on how I have explored my processual view on dress practice through making 'wardrobe biographies' during my interviews, so as to be able to detect patterns of change throughout my informants' lives. My field work chapter represents a testing out and revision of my methodology, while finally, my concluding chapter addresses the connection between theoretical framework, methodology, and field work.

From here, I move on to part II, in which I collaborate with the Danish designer, Mads Nørgaard. Here, I take a closer look at the discrepancy between the way 'fashion' is being produced, promoted, disseminated and sold, and the way in which people appropriate new dress objects in their wardrobes. In my literature review, I further address the issue of temporality. In order to do so, I have focused on the overall discussion surrounding the concept of 'favourites'. This concept has been coined by Klepp (2010), and represents dress objects that people treasure particularly, and consequently keep in their wardrobes for a long period of time. In my field work chapter, I have examined the way that Mads Nørgaard's idea of 'favourites' are transformed into my informants' ideas of 'favourites'. In this way, I call attention in my concluding chapter to the fact that these two variations have an essentially different

nature, and to how a closer bridging of consumption and production might start with this realisation.

Finally, in part III, I investigate the potentials and limitations of the wardrobe method in relation to design processes, in order to question further the relation between the production and consumption of dress objects. This part of my thesis was conducted under particular auspices: my research was financed by Danish shoe producer, ECCO, in collaboration with Design School Kolding. For this reason, the field work chapter is about people's relation to shoes. Through collaborating with a designer in my field work and throughout the various phases of analysis, I compare the way that this professional designer observes and processes what we encounter with my own way of observing and processing.

In my final concluding chapter, I follow up on the three parts of the thesis, taken now as a whole, and summarize the way that they each - and together - contribute with alternative understandings of dress practice, and pose questions related to industry practices as they are currently being conducted.







**PART 1**

**THE DAILY SELECTION**

## Introduction

My point of departure for this first part of my thesis is to explore and develop a deeper understanding of people's everyday dress practice. In order to do so, I started out by conducting a pilot study of one informant and his wardrobe, and then I repeated the study, with minor adjustments, with one more informant. On the basis of the coding processes of these studies, I developed theoretical frameworks with which I could explain what I had encountered. These frameworks later functioned as building blocks, on the basis of which I could continue conducting the remaining studies of the thesis. Prior to the studies, I had a set of pre-understandings that evolved around the concept of practice. Whereas this concept is wide-ranging and enmeshed in a variety of scholarly disciplines, my wish has been to develop a definition that could embrace *the act of dressing* as well as the interrelation between wearer and object, place and time. In this introduction, I will sketch out my own approach to studying people's dress practice through the so-called 'wardrobe method', a method developed by scholars of fashion and dress that interlinks the micro-practices going on in people's individual wardrobes with larger macro-structures of society. With Ingold's ontology of 'dwelling' in mind, I have found how the wardrobe method engages with dress objects as material artefacts to be highly relevant. Defining my approach to practice, I have found it useful to look closer at Joanne Entwistle's concept of dressing as a 'bodily situated practice' (Entwistle 2000), which easily adopts to the ideas emerging from the emotional and bodily turn within design research. Secondly, I have made use of Elizabeth Shove's concept of 'everyday practice', because I see in this a close connection with the call for a focus on 'the ordinary' and the everyday in certain factions of fashion and dress research. What binds these two definitions of practice together is an interest in how people interact with design objects in their everyday routines, and in how these routines are both embodied in and referential to culture at one and the same time. With this understanding as my overall framework, I elaborate how all this is put in play through combining visual anthropology with relevant methods from participatory design, thus situating my own methodology as a combination of these scholarly approaches. After my field work chapter, I will be summarising my theoretical coding in a concluding chapter.

### *The wardrobe method*

If looking at the etymological dictionary, the word 'wardrobe' emerged in late 14th Century France as a variant of the older French 'garderobe' ('garder la robe'; store/protect + garment). This original expression stood for a "place where garments are kept", and was earlier on simply "a private chamber". The English expression derives from *warder* (to keep, guard), and *robe* (garment), signifying "room where wearing apparel is kept" (etymologyonline.com). Basically, the wardrobe is the place where people store their dress objects, but also where they manage or 'guard' it, in different ways, depending on the amount of space available, and on their ability to keep order, manage their laundry, acquire new – and get rid of – objects that are no longer in use. What they also 'guard' is their self-image, which is why they work out various strategies for covering up what they don't like about their bodies, or various strategies for enhancing what they would like to show in public. The same is the case, on a more symbolic level, insofar as the wardrobe is the place where people transform themselves from private to social beings. Thus, they emphasise features about themselves that they would like others to appreciate, and cover up what they wish to hide. Because of this, the wardrobe is an extremely interesting place to study from the respective vantage points of a variety of scholarly disciplines. Within the wardrobe network that was active from around 2008-2013, scholarly approaches have included, for example, economic history (Ulväng 2013), ethnology/consumer studies (Klepp 2001/2010), gender studies (Warkander 2013), social anthropology (Skov 2011), art history (Sigurjónsdóttir et al. 2001), and design research (Skjold in: Sommerlund (ed.) 2011). Very important contributions for establishing the wardrobe method were made prior to the establishment of the wardrobe network from within consumer research (Kleine, Kleine & Allen 1995), anthropology (Guy, Green & Banim 2001; Hansen 2003), design research (Raunio 2007; Fletcher & Tham 2004), costume history (Turney & Harden 2007), and material culture studies (Woodward 2007). What these studies share is an interest in the materiality and physical storage of dress objects, and an interest in the way the objects are handled, worn, maintained, acquired, and discarded by their wearers in the wardrobe. When we take the rich presence of many various disciplinary approaches to the wardrobe in the wardrobe network into consideration, it is obvious that the objectives of study have varied. From the perspective of an economic history approach, Ulväng (2013) has looked at the connection between dress objects in the wardrobe as personal property on the one hand, and commodity on the other. Through her analysis



of estate inventories compiled throughout the 19th Century in the parish of Lillhärda in Sweden, Ulväng documents how industrialism changed gender roles and consumption patterns in the area, through documenting valuations of dress objects in wardrobes in the period. Sigurjónsdóttir, Langkjaer and Turney (Sigurjónsdóttir et al. (eds.) 2011) have examined photography in relation to the clothed body, showing how it has been a significant medium in the creation of socio-cultural discourses. These mentioned approaches have coloured what I have done in this thesis, but I will now turn to the ones that I find particularly correlative with my own work. I will here address what I see as relevant contributions in relation to the site of the wardrobe as private, social, and physical space – and most importantly, contributions that deal with the linking of dress practice and temporality.

As an overall framework for understanding the connection between dress practice and time and space, I follow Kleine, Kleine & Allen's metaphor of the wardrobe as a 'personal archive or museum'. In their study, which has been conducted within the discipline of consumer research, they see the wardrobe as representing 'present self, past selves that are being carried on, past selves that are being let go, anticipated selves' (Kleine, Kleine & Allen 1995:328). What I find particularly interesting about this view of the wardrobe is the way that the authors let go of a view on the object-subject relation as portraying some kind of authentic inner core, around which are 'layers of decreasing authenticity' (ibid:341), applying instead the life narrative as a way through which the content of the wardrobe is perceived. As such, the content of people's wardrobes is constantly being re-evaluated, as they move through life and re-define themselves. Here, Kleine et al. see fluctuant versions of 'me' such as "who I am, who I have been, who I am becoming, and/or who I am no longer" (ibid:328). Similar observations have been made by anthropologists Guy and Banim (in: Guy, Green and Banim 2001), who found, in their study of women in their wardrobes, categories of dress objects representing 'the woman I want to be', 'the woman I fear I could be', and 'the woman I am most of the time'. These typologies each represented aspects of the informants' identity work, categorised by the authors as:

1. *continuing identities*: "where women referred to no-longer-worn clothing in ways that reflected their continuing connection with a self-image they had achieved through using those clothes"
2. *discontinued identities*: "no-longer-worn clothes which represented a former identity that the women felt was no longer viable or wished to distance themselves from"

3. *transitional identities*: "no-longer-worn clothes that are perceived to be 'on the move' in the sense that their viability to their owners' self-image is being considered but has not been fully resolved"

(ibid: 205-14)

What this study displays is the advantage of studying people at the site of the wardrobe: through observing people's emotional and physical interactions with what they store, dress objects can be regarded as material evidence of lived lives that are immediately accessible at the site of the study, and can lead beyond people's own rationalisations. What is essential in the processes that are lived out in the wardrobe is that they are all centred on the act of dressing. It is when people get dressed that they are deciding, each and every day, what to select from their collection of dress objects. Following Lefebvre, Skov (2010) suggests regarding the act of dressing as one that is always inscribed in time and space, as 'punctuations in the flow of everyday life" (ibid:6), and further builds her understanding of the site of the wardrobe on Lefebvre's idea that the mental, the social and the physical intersect in space (Lefebvre 1991/2004, in: ibid). Of Skov's distinctions, I find 'social space: time and relationships' to be particularly interesting. Here, Skov establishes a connection between the wardrobe in its original, etymological meaning of a 'private chamber', where people keep and guard all kinds of secrets and feelings of shame and doubt - physical and symbolical ones - and the way they make use of dress objects as 'framing devices', through which they understand and manage their own social position. Here, Skov draws on Goffman's concept of front stage and back stage, which is obvious inasmuch as it directs aspects of great relevance to the wardrobe method. In his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffmann leads off with the following motivation:

*"When an individual appears before others he will try to control the impression he gives off - this report is concerned with the techniques that persons employ to sustain such impressions."*

(Goffmann 1990 [1959]:26)

As instruments for deploying these techniques, Goffmann suggests 'clothing, sex, age, racial characteristics, size, looks, posture, speech patterns, facial expressions, bodily gestures, and the like' (ibid:34). As such, I agree with Skov that the space of the

wardrobe belongs to back stage activities of preparing this 'personal front' and of managing the 'dramaturgical problems of presenting the activity' (ibid:26).

Skov's approach is taken further by Woodward (2007). Although she participated only briefly in the network, she has made a enormously important contribution to the wardrobe method, based on a material culture studies perspective. In her study of young women in their wardrobes, Woodward took her point of departure in 'the wardrobe moment':

*"This 'wardrobe moment', which is experienced at least once a day, mediates clothing as appearance management and public display and the private, intimate domain of the bedroom and wardrobe. When the outfit is worn, unless it proves to be a failure, all of these anxieties are concealed; it is in the unseen domain of the bedroom where the anguished moments occur. As women choose outfits from their wardrobe, they stand looking at their reflection and wonder about whether they have 'got it right' for a particular occasion."*

(Woodward 2007:3)

Basing her view of the wardrobe as people's 'personal collection', Woodward looks at aspects of dress practice such as how the women studied sometimes break the 'rules' of fashion to create new looks, and how their self-perception is played up against the gaze of others. Woodward's basic objective is to contribute with valid reflections on the way women negotiate beauty ideals through what they wear. By doing so, she points out how the private micro-space of the wardrobe is connected to the macro-level of societal currents, and how this interconnection is most vividly played out in the act of getting dressed. What I find to be quite interesting in terms of method is how she documents dress objects in the wardrobe and the stories they are associated with, as well as life stories of the informants. She has, moreover, asked her informants to keep dress diaries, building in this way an understanding of the values, morals and ethics that affect what is worn on a daily basis. A similar kind of appearance management has also been described by Warkander (2013), who, from a gender studies perspective, has been looking at the way transgendered people in Stockholm negotiate appearance. Of particular interest in relation to my own study is that he has made observations on how the space of the wardrobe can be viewed as a kind of extension of the identity work going on in the dress practices of his informants: how décor, furnishing, posters, boudoir set-up, and even types of wardrobe closets can be viewed as being closely connected

with ideas of self. In Warkander's study, he has made ethnographic observations and interviews in the clubbing milieu of transvestites in Stockholm, a scene that is normally closed off for outsiders, as well as more in-depth semi-structured interviews with a few selected informants in their wardrobes. Warkander terms his studies in wardrobes 'organic wardrobe studies', as an upshot of these reflections:

*"The term 'organic' refers to the process of letting the garments become the starting point of improvised and personal conversations about style and dress practices. The organic wardrobe study allowed the participants to discuss more freely their feelings about specific garments, showing me what clothing combinations they appreciated, or how favourite outfits were stored. [...] To discuss events and feelings while looking at, sometimes even holding and touching, an actual garment in a person's closet helps articulate feelings which otherwise would have been hard to get at."*

(Warkander 2013:61-62)

As an example of this, Warkander observes how his informant, 'Anthony', has photos of Brit Pop idol Jarvis Cocker and American drag queen Divine posted on the walls of his bedroom, and how he similarly mixes 'feminine' or 'masculine' elements of furnishing and décor in his flat. Warkander perceives this as a reflection of Anthony's aesthetic ideals, of which his sartorial style of 'masculine femininity' is only a part (ibid:205-7). In this way, Warkander gives voice to my own idea about how all the objects that we interact with and surround ourselves with are all kinds of expressive, extended selves with which we situate ourselves in culture, a point that is argued by consumer studies scholars like Belk (1995), Østergaard & Jantzen (2000), or McCracken, who has stated how

*"consumer goods are an important medium of our culture. They are a place we keep our private and public meanings. Cars and clothing, for instance, come loaded with meanings, meanings we use to define ourselves."*

(McCracken 2005:3)

As I do, Warkander builds his notion of dress objects as extended selves on ideas of the embodied habitus (Bourdieu 1997), and, in doing so, perceives daily negotiation processes in the wardrobe as important sites of study. Addressing the 'queer styles' of his informants, he follows Barthes in the distinction between 'fashion' and 'style'. According to Barthes, 'fashion' is intimately connected with the development of

capitalism, and thereby with the changes of seasons, whereas 'style' is related to matters of tradition and convention, thereby changing at a much slower pace (Barthes 2006 [1967]:108 in: Warkander 2013:31). What I find particularly interesting is how Warkander, in this way, transforms the negotiative processes of his informants into negotiations of style, of which 'fashion' is subordinate. Simultaneously, he perceives this negotiation of style as an act of bricolage, referring to the concept deriving from Lévi-Strauss (1966 [1962]), as it is implemented by Dick Hebdige in his book, *Subculture. The Meaning of Style* (1988 [1979]).

In this thesis, I am just like Warkander opposed to the idea that all dress practices can somehow be explained through the logics of 'fashion', 'anti-fashion' or 'the unfashionable', and would like to launch into consideration how particularly temporal aspects of dress practices are currently under-researched. Studies of wardrobes with this objective have been made, as mentioned above, but I want to elaborate this further, in order to contribute with a more highly reflected and more faceted understanding of dress practice. Firstly, Raunio (2007) has highlighted how people seem to take special care of dress objects that awaken particular feelings and emotions in the wearer, such as hand-made objects, which is why these kinds of objects last longer in the wardrobe than others. This key idea can be said to be dominating the approach of ethnographer and consumer studies scholar Klepp (2001/2010) as well as design research scholar Fletcher (2008; Fletcher & Tham 2004), who each have contributed, in their own respective ways, to understandings of dress practice that go beyond explanations of 'fashion'. Motivated by the issue of sustainability, both of these scholars show how dress practices are, in fact, not solely driven by the logics of 'fashion' but work, instead, in slower paces that have to be understood in other ways. As characteristic of the wardrobe method, it is through addressing how people interact with actual dress objects in their wardrobes that these understandings emerge: in the present case, how people prolong the life cycle of dress objects in the wardrobe through combining, mending, maintaining or re-designing objects. Building on these ideas, I wish to highlight even further the current lack of research on dress practice, particularly in terms of dressing as an embodied, temporally fluent practice.

To summarise, I am building my study on a view of the wardrobe as a kind of 'museum of selves', in which people negotiate embodied and relational matters of appearance. Here, I regard 'fashion' as quite a limited explanatory framework, or at least as merely one of many parameters that effect what people select to wear from what they store -

which I suggest ought to be regarded as their 'dress style', since this framework is considerably more elastic and inclusive than 'fashion'. To explore these parameters in a more in-depth way, I have chosen to zoom in on people's negotiation of appearance in their daily routines and practices through Klepp's concept of *favourites*: how people's daily selection is based on pre-understandings of self that have been evolving throughout the course of their lives. Thus, repetitive patterns of similar objects emerge in people's wardrobes as they develop their taste patterns, and it is these repetitive patterns that constitute their personal style of dressing. I see this as being aligned with the ontology of processual sociological theory, especially as it has been defined by Latour. Latour sees stabilized states as imagined and inherently relational, like a travel or 'railway line', and action as entailing a 'knot' of agencies from both actor (subject) and actant (object) (Latour 2005). Following organization studies scholar Hernes, I propose seeing the space of the wardrobe as a 'canvas of possibilities' in constant process. Thus, a stabilized state such as a particular style of dressing, is inherently relational, and constantly reproduced and re-negotiated. For example, a person can move from being "I am a person who wears tight jeans", to "I am a person who rarely wears tight jeans" and finally to "I am a person who can never wear tight jeans (again)". The dress object is the same, but the person has changed. In a Latourian understanding, artefacts such as dress objects achieve fluctuating meanings through associations with human actors; specific artefacts may work as actants in that they introduce new styles, but their capacity as actants may change over time (and most often do). Therefore, the wardrobe is a site of opportunity for studying our dress practice as a processual activity that is situated in 'a tangled world', in which new becomings emerge repeatedly, albeit most frequently as adjustments of the same. Hernes perceives processes as 'entanglements', where entities - such as actors, technologies, brands and rules - emerge and co-evolve. Any entity is thus a 'tangled mass' that is continuously on the move towards becoming something else. Cultural anthropologist Tim Ingold has carried the metaphor of entanglement even further (Ingold 2008). In his view, entities form 'knots' or 'weavings', which cannot be understood fully when looking only at the surface. What Ingold is aspiring towards is to oppose a perception of time and development that is particular to Western society as being linear: a dotted line, consisting of a 'succession of instants'. This positivist world view, Ingold claims, does not really correlate with how people actually interact with the world. A rational, purpose-oriented ontology that aims at 'joining the dots' does not grasp what goes on 'in everyday life or in ordinary discourse' (ibid:3). To Ingold, the process that is taking place as people live their lives is a 'curved line' that is entangled with other lines, thus connected in 'weavings', 'loops' or

'knots'. I propose looking at the space of the wardrobe through this perception of the interrelation between subject, time and place, and I also subscribe to Ingold's concept of 'dwelling' (Ingold 2000), in the way that I perceive the relation between people's dress practices and the dress objects they store and wear. I also propose to view Klepp's concept of 'favourites' in light of this processual understanding, because people's ideas about their 'favourites' seem to connect past, present, and future wardrobes.

### *Dressing as practice*

In the following, I will attempt to clarify what I mean when I speak of dress practice as embodied and relational. I will do so by establishing a framework that combines Joanne Entwistle's view of dress practice as a *bodily situated practice* with Shove et al.'s understanding of everyday practices as on-going processes. I will thereby try to operationalize my idea that people's rituals of getting dressed are, to a significant extent, routine actions that build on past experiences of success and failure, which cause them to constantly re-adjust their appearance – and to cast light on how these experiences have to do with bodily sensations, as well as social relations.

In Joanne Entwistle's book: *The Fashioned Body. Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (2000), she addresses how dressing, as an embodied practice, has been neglected, because it is positioned between a structuralist and art historical interest for surfaces and sign-making on the one hand, and, on the other, a sociology of the body that is disinterested in fashion and dress. In her book, she tries to bridge these understandings by making the following overall argument:

*"I propose the idea of dress as situated bodily practice as a theoretical and methodological framework for understanding the complex dynamic relationship between the body, dress and culture. Such a framework recognizes that bodies are socially constituted, always situated in culture and the outcome of individual practices directed towards the body: in other words, 'dress' is the result of 'dressing' or 'getting dressed'.*

(Entwistle 2000:11)

Entwistle argues that literature on fashion has, by and large, ignored the body, perceiving fashion instead as a distinctive system that is highly occupied with dress

objects as markers of status, because of the close alliance with Western capitalist society dating back to the 14th Century. At the same time, semiotic readings, as defined by Barthes (2006) have had their focus on aesthetics rather than on dressing as everyday practice, fuelled by Cartesian dualism, which separates mind and body. Conversely, she argues that classic sociology has disregarded the importance of fashion and dress, and the practices surrounding them because of the discipline's focus on action and rationality. Thus, classic sociology has condemned the whole area of fashion as 'irrational', as evolving around the vain and effeminate body, seen by a male-dominated society as being morally suspect. Entwistle insists that this unfortunate neglect of the dressed body discloses a glaring lack in (particularly sociological) literature that can *"give an account of dress within everyday life that is not reductive or theoretically abstract, but theoretically complex and empirically grounded"* (here from Entwistle in: Wilson and Entwistle 2001:76). As a theoretical framework for this, Entwistle suggests looking deeper into Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological argument (Merleau-Ponty 1976/1981, in: Entwistle 2000), which holds that it is through the body that we experience the world. That *"we grasp external space, relationships between objects and our relationship to them through our position in, and movement through, the world"* (ibid:28). Supporting this with Bourdieu's idea of habitus as being embodied and Goffmann's ideas on appearance as part of social practice, she follows Mauss (1973, in: ibid), arguing that dressing is an embodied 'technology of self'.

A very similar approach can be found in the way Jennifer Craik sees dress practice as a 'body technique'. Building equally on Bourdieu and Mauss, she argues that:

*" Codes of dress are technical devices which articulate the relationship between a particular body and its lived milieu, the space occupied by bodies and constituted by bodily actions. In other words, clothes construct a personal habitus."*

(Craik 1994:4)

Why are these way of understanding the matter important to me? It is because I subscribe completely to Eicher's idea that our senses play a very important role in our everyday dressing routines. However, when it comes to my own work, I find Craik's and Entwistle's understandings of dressing as an embodied practice more useful than Eicher's emphasis on focusing on all five senses. I believe, in agreement with Eicher, that the senses of touch, smell, hearing and taste (Johnson & Foster 2007:2) are just as important as the sense of sight, but I prefer to regard the various senses as being



engaged in a whole-body experience through which people experience the world through dressing. What I aim to accomplish in my study is to draw from Craik's and Entwistle's sociological understandings of habitus and then apply this to my fieldwork study of how people select what to wear, in order to pose the question of how dressing as embodied practice is actually re-enacted by people in their everyday lives. In relation to this, I understand sensory experiences of dressing as being related to what former ballet dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp has called 'muscle memory'. Tharp is addressing how the body of a dancer will remember certain moves and steps for decades, even if these steps are lost in memory. Through the continued repetition, over and over, of these moves through training, a dancer will only need to make a few gestures with a hand and then the exact moves will be remembered by the body – even many years after a performance. Tharp describes it in this way:

*"Then there's sensual memory, where the sudden appearance of smell or taste or sound or color instantly floods the imagination with images from the past [...] This kind of notion is tricky to put into words, particularly when the memory we're dealing with is nonverbal and involves physical movement. But I know there are many moments in my working day when I sit back and ask myself, 'How do I know that this particular creative decision on the dance floor, going from x to y, is right?' 'What makes me so sure I'm making the right choice?' The answer I whisper to myself is nothing more than, 'It feels right'. And part of the reason it feels right is that the move has been reinforced in us over centuries of practice. Every dance I make is a dive into this well of ancient memory."*

(Tharp 2006:67/70)

This reminded me of when my daughter was a little girl, when she often spent time with her grandparents. When I arrived with her, I would typically have placed the waistline of her trousers quite low, as this is where I believe the waistline should be. This is how I like my own waistline to be; this is what I believe 'feels right'. However, when I would come back to pick her up again, I experienced how not only my mother, but also my father-in-law, would have positioned her waistline differently, that is, right below her chest. I would immediately put it back, once I got out from their apartment. But as I started thinking about it, it made sense since they, both being children of the post-war years, believed that *this* is where the waistline should be placed on a baby's trousers. Looking at photos from when *they* were growing up, I could tell how they and their brothers and sisters all wore trousers with a very high waistline. Later on, I read how the anthropologist Mizrahi had the same experience of how her young, Brazilian

informants interacted with their jeans. They also had their own personal notions about the fit and waistline of their jeans, stemming here from cultural ideas about gender and seduction (Mizrahi in: Miller & Woodward 2011). I suggest understanding dressing as an embodied practice through what Tharp expresses above as being very fruitful – that what we believe 'feels right' to wear is the result of centuries of culture that have been 'reinforced in us over centuries of practice', as Tharp describes it above. As such, I find it reasonable to relate this to Polanyi's concept of 'tacit knowledge', since he addresses how we, as human beings, build our experience on the basis of a trial-and-error technique, very much like animals, and further addresses how one of our very basic instincts is to avoid dangers on the basis of past experience (Polanyi 1974). In much the same way, people learn how to perform and dress appropriately through mimicking what they experience others are doing, and are in danger of being the object of societal ridicule and exclusion should they fail to dress or act according to expectations or beyond the culturally recognizable. As I see it, such learnings are being passed on from generation to generation, as time evolves. Not only within families but also within specific cultures. As I have argued elsewhere in relation to dress and music, dancing is an interesting practice to look into if one wishes to explore the relation between bodily performativity and dress objects. From the *poulaines*, pointy shoes that are up to three times as long as the foot, worn at dance-like processions in the European courts of the 14th Century, to the loose-fitting robes and soft-sole 'Jesus sandals' and shoes worn by the hippies for the languid and free-form "idiot-dancing" in the 1970s (Hebdige 1979:109), what people wear and how they move and gesture are closely connected with the cultural structures they inhabit and experience (Skjold in: Skov (ed.) 2010). Therefore, studying the materiality of dress objects becomes highly relevant, because it is the sensory experiences of these objects that aid us in performing appropriately according to societal norms. Whether we relate this to denim, as does Mizrahi, or to brass anklets worn by semi-naked women in Nigeria (Adams in: Johnson & Foster 2007), dress objects help the body to look and move so that it 'feels right'. As both Craik and Entwistle highlight, even the naked body is subdued into accepting ideas about appropriate conduct in a given society, and what people wear is only an extension of this.

Within the area of design research, a so-called 'emotional turn' that points to exactly these issues has taken place within recent decades. An important contribution to this discussion has been provided by Norman, who in his book, *Emotional Design. Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things* (2004), distinguishes between various levels of cognitive

and emotional systems at work when we interact with design objects: a *visceral* level that is pre-conscious, pre-thought, 'where appearance matter and first impressions are formed' - about the touch, feel and appearance of an object; a *behavioural* level, which is about the function, the performance and the usability of an object; and finally, a *reflective* level which has to do with feelings, emotions, and cognition. On top of these levels, Norman places a traditional dividing line between the 'needs' and the 'wants' of consumers. Where the first parameter addresses physical and practical needs, the latter evolves around cultural differences that are related to *appropriateness*. This is particularly relevant to his reflective level, because this level is connected with 'culture, experience, education and individual differences' (ibid:38). Another important contribution has been provided by Jordan (2000), who distinguishes between four levels of interaction between people and objects that he refers to as 'pleasures': *physio-pleasure*, *socio-pleasure*, *psycho-pleasure* and *ideo-pleasure*. Of these, the first can be correlated with Norman's visceral level, the second to his behavioural level, and the latter two to his reflective level (for a more extensive elaboration on Jordan see part III). What is important in both Norman's and Jordan's approaches is how sensory and reflective experiences of design interplay. It is also worth noticing in this context that both Norman and Jordan approach these issues with the objective of supporting design processes. It is also worth noticing how, essentially, designers might learn to make better and more valued products through considering various levels of everyday user experiences. The concept of 'emotional design' has sparked an interest in the sensory aspects of people's interaction with design. However, even as this concept might have the potential of opening up sensory perspectives of wider-ranging character, they also stand in danger of being reduced to what Shove et al. (2007) call 'add-on's' at design studios. This is not because the frameworks are not working, but because they have been created as hands-on 'tools' for designers to use in product-development processes. Still, I think that it is important to mention them here, since they have coloured the debate I engage with.

Summing up these approaches and how they are seen as being valuable in this study, I understand Entwistle's concept of dressing as a bodily situated practice in the following way: dressing is a sensory, full-body experience, reinforced in individuals through cultural structures; accordingly, what we believe 'feels right' to wear is a result of 'muscle memory' - a shared and personally embodied sensation of being dressed 'appropriately' that builds on past experience. These considerations are supported by

research on 'emotional design' that further highlights how cultural structures are reinforced through people's embodied and reflective interaction with design objects.

In order to further explore how everyday practices around design take place through space and time, I have looked into the area of "participatory design", which is shaped by a democratic, Scandinavian approach to 'flat' decision-making processes (Schuler & Amioka 1993), as well as by ideals of 'produsage' (production and usage) taking place in, for example, computer games (Bruns 2007). As Shove et al. argue in their book, *The Design of Everyday Life. Cultures of Consumption* (2008), this whole area of what they term 'user-centred design' opens up a line of questions concerning the ethical and social responsibilities of the design profession, because here, 'value resides in the relation between people and things, rather than in things alone' (ibid:119). As an overall framework, Shove et al. distinguish between 'user-centred design', 'product-centred design', and 'practice-oriented approach to product design'. They promote the latter mentioned approach based on their field studies of, for example, people's everyday interaction with their kitchens, their DIY projects, and their digital cameras, as well as on interviews with designers. What they find is that even if the idea of user-centred design radically influences the self-perception of the design profession, it might as well be applied as a mere add-on to a more traditional product-development process at the design studio (such as the emotional design approach of Norman and Jordan mentioned above). This, they argue, is only possible because of the gap between user-centred and product-centred design approaches, in which there is a lack of understanding about how people actually make use of design products in their everyday lives. This gap exists because user-centred design has its focus on establishing a close connection between objects and user, but not between objects and user *practices*. Shove et al. subsequently call for a whole re-design of design itself, in which 'designers and their clients might look for ways of understanding and influencing the evolution of practice over space and time' (ibid:135). The basic understanding is that designers not only design stuff, they design practices. Theoretically, the implication of this is that design is not being reduced to semantic carriers of symbolic meaning, as is often the case within the discipline of social studies; nor is it being reduced to a kind of media through which aspects of social interaction can be revealed, as we see in material culture studies. Relating this to theories of social practice, another implication of this involves the bridging of the rational purpose-orientation of *homo economicus* and the norm-driven action of *homo sociologicus*, through the idea that 'practices are the fundamental unit of social existence' (ibid:12). Pursuing the idea that 'competence is at once embodied in humans

*and in things'*, which has been derived from Bruno Latour's concept of the human-nonhuman hybrid (Latour 1993, in Shove et al. *ibid*:56), the authors point how the whole theoretical landscape, in its search for ways of understanding our interrelation with objects, has missed out on targeting adequate focus on use, making, and doing in people's everyday lives. And how a such focus would entail exploring more deeply how people's competences and knowledge in relation to objects are temporally ingrained in their daily routines and aspirations. In relation to my own studies of people in their wardrobes, I have approached the ideas of Shove et al.'s concept of 'practice-oriented product design' by looking more closely at the knowledge and competences engaged in my informants' dress practices. I have asked myself what kinds of competences it actually takes to be able to get dressed every day, on what grounds people base their daily decision-making processes, and how dress objects as material entities play a role in these processes. Obviously, people do not start all over again every day, since this would be far too time-consuming and frustrating. I have therefore been looking at ways of understanding how people establish criteria and 'rules' for how to dress in ways that they feel are appropriate and in tact with their own ideas of self, and how this takes place in the daily, routine-based act of getting dressed, as well as in fluent processes transpiring over time. In the following, I will dwell more on how this takes place.

### *Dressing dilemmas*

In Karen Tranberg Hansen's work on 2Hand markets in Zambia (Hansen 2000/2003), she has shown how the local values and morals of dressing are ingrained in the dress practices of Zambians. What they need to be aware of is how to 'translate' the values encoded by designers in discarded dress objects from the West into the values of *Salaula*. What they do is to re-design and re-combine the dress objects so that they become appropriate for their own setting. Hansen mentions a few more 'problems' with the Western 2Hand dress objects, which local Zambians need to 'solve'. For example, the Western silhouette is typically more tight-fitting and body-revealing, and this is a problem particularly for young girls, who need to re-combine and re-make objects into the appropriate silhouette that both follows and obscures their bodies. If they fail to do so, they might be regarded as being morally depraved, and might have to face social consequences as grave as rape and similar unspeakable kinds of assaults. Another problem with the Western dress objects is the colour palette, which doesn't match the

approved one. Hence, every single wearer is responsible for matching and combining objects in order to end up with an appropriate colour palette. Hansen considers this work by wearers as 'the hard work of consumption', which demands a certain level of 'clothing competence'. I find her concept of 'clothing competence' to be highly relevant to my own work, inasmuch as it bridges the idea of an interrelation between people and objects that takes place in time and space, as well as linking up to the Entwistle's idea that 'becoming a competent member involves acquiring knowledge of the cultural norms and expectations demanded of the body' (2000:11). Within this overall understanding of people's clothing competences dwells also the idea that for every single individual, there is some kind of 'problem' that needs to be 'solved' through what is worn, which addresses the issue of appropriateness. It is not in all societies that the punishment for dressing inappropriately is as grave as it is in Zambia, even if in some societies, the consequences are even worse - just think of the women who were executed in public for wearing make-up under their burkas under the 'justice' meted out by the Taleban regime in Afghanistan. In most cases, though, the consequences are more likely to be manifest in various types of isolation or publicly displayed contempt. I propose to consider these 'problems' of dressing in the light of Tarlo's concept of 'dressing dilemmas' (1995). Similar to Hansen, Tarlo has been examining a sample exhibiting particular dilemmas between local and Western values and morals for dressing. In Tarlo's case, she looked at families in India, and how the younger generations, in particular, had to manage the cultural split between the traditional values being practiced in their homes and the Western values they encountered at college. And how they literally changed attire on their way home from college - and vice versa - in order to meet the expectations of appropriateness in both places.

In looking at this mechanism in a timely perspective, I am addressing once more the approach to practice as defined by Shove et al., this time around, through their model of 'having and doing'. What this model captures is the temporal relationship between what kinds of stuff people have (having), and how they go about using it in their everyday routines (doing). Here, the central argument of the authors is that new practices fuel 'needs' for new acquisitions, and that these acquisitions, in turn, fuel new practices, in an endless loop. Shove et al. perceives the fuel of this process to be people's ideas - 'imagined scenarios' - about the interrelation between how they live and what they possess. What the authors found in their study was that whereas some were able to find some kind of balance between daily practices and possessions, others found themselves to be in a constant state of crisis, because they couldn't manage to get the balance right.

Through qualitative interviews and observations, Shove et al. found that the latter group constantly spun new visions about future practices (i.e. not watching television in the kitchen while eating but having nice family dinners, instead), or visions about future renovation projects (i.e. a wish to enlarge the kitchen so as to have enough space for storage). Shove et al. examined why these 'imagined scenarios' about a better balance were not always in better balance with how things worked out in the present, and how this frustrated the informants. Shove et al. describe this frustration as a 'constant itch', which gives rise to feelings of shame, guilt and insufficiency: altogether, a feeling of "restlessness" (Shove et al. 2008:24).

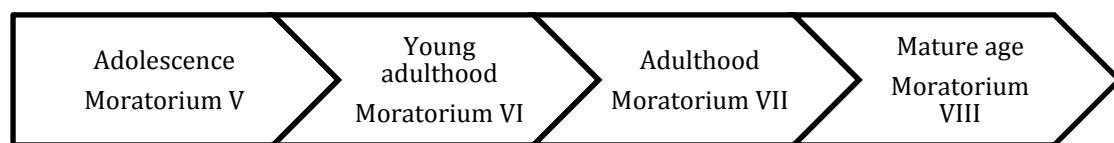
I consider this view to be very fruitful to my study, because it displaces the focus from the interrelation between user and object to the one that takes place between object and user practices. Hence, the way people make use of their 'clothing competences' in their everyday lives in order to be able to solve their 'dressing dilemmas' is seen as a key to understanding dress practice as a fluent process, in which people negotiate matters of appearance over time. In order to frame these thoughts and make them instrumental in my research, I have developed two models of understanding through which I understand my informants. To frame how they build their taste preferences over time, I have developed the model of *sensory anchoring*. To frame how they interact with concepts such as 'fashion', 'anti-fashion' or 'the unfashionable', I have developed the model of *sartorial systems*. It is these models that I will be looking at throughout the entire thesis, through different perspectives.

### *Sensory anchoring*

In order to theorise a processual view on dress practice, I propose to view it through the lens of psychology, following Erikson's concept of *identity crisis* (Erikson 1956). Erikson perceives people's lives as evolving through various phases of identity crisis, which he calls 'moratoriums'. Of these, the most important one is the 'youth moratorium': adolescence, where people are transformed from children to adults, where they break loose from their parents, and where they start forming their own idea of self. This 'youth moratorium', claims Erikson, is a particularly difficult period of identity testing that often knocks people out of balance, while in later moratoriums, it is often the case that identity matters are revised but not altered completely. Thus, Erikson believes, people

form very important ideas of self when they are young, and as they grow older and take on jobs, get children and partners, and meet other changes in their lives, they accordingly adjust their identity to 'older versions' of the same. Very importantly, Erikson sees these 'moratoriums' as phases of shorter or longer duration, and not as short-lasting moments of change. This idea bridges the processual view that I have tried to implement throughout the fieldwork with Shove et al.'s model of 'having' and 'doing': what I believe is that during the phase of adolescence, people seek ways of managing their appearance that match their 'inner' ideas of self, and their 'outer' structures. Since they are in the process of realising who they are, this sometimes causes rapid changes of appearance, typically giving rise, at least, to some form of experimentation with what they wear. All this is fuelled by 'imagined scenario's of who they think they have been, presently are, or could be in the future. In this way, 'fashion mistakes' seem to take place particularly during the youth moratorium, as young people test identities that are, or are not, working for them. In later phases, people adjust what they found to be working by transforming their past wardrobe into 'older' versions', when they are subjected to changes in 'outer' structures such as marriage, kids, jobs, or changes in their body. The shifts in appearance are far less rapid, and are often built on repetitions. I see this whole process as being anchored in sensory experiences, as well as in more referential concerns (in what to 'signal'). What appears below is, first, Erikson's model of 'moratoriums', and after this, my own model of *sensory anchoring*.

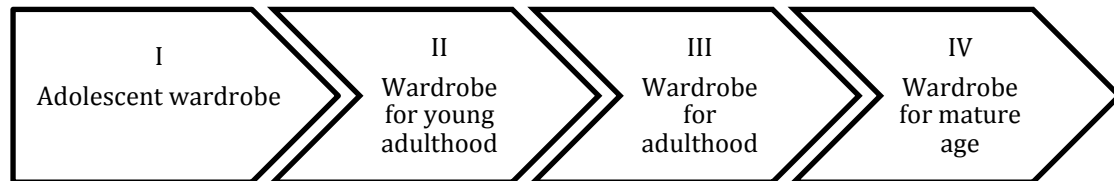
### ERIKSON'S MODEL OF 'MORATORIUMS'



In Erikson's original model are also Moratoriums I (Infancy), II (Early childhood), III (Play age) and IV (School age) (Erikson 1956:75), and in this sense, there is a continuity between upbringing and adult life that concerned Erikson as a psychologist. However, I have chosen to zoom in on the moratoriums that concern adult life, since they are related to my own objectives (see model on next page).



## SENSORY ANCHORING MODEL



My model of *sensory anchoring*, displaying how people develop and adjust their taste patterns from their adolescent years and onwards, as seen through their wardrobes. These adjustments are, to a very large extent, coloured by *sensory experience of what feels 'right' or 'wrong' to wear*. Very importantly, they are seen as taking place in *overlapping phases of time/shorter or longer phases of transition*, not overnight. As such, a processual view is being highlighted here!

I: A wardrobe in search of identity that is often found through group memberships

II: A wardrobe that is getting more stable, as people find dress styles that start to 'feel right'

III: Individual dress styles are being adjusted and adapted into 'older versions', as grown up responsibilities such as marriage, having kids, or starting work life, starts impacting the daily routines. Furthermore, adjustments are made in correlation with bodily changes due to ageing.

IV: The wardrobe is now relatively stable, but can still be adjusted due to i.e. a new type of job, bodily changes, or other life changing events that provokes periods of transition.

To sum it up, I perceive the relation between 'having' and 'doing' in people's wardrobes to be a kind of *sensory anchoring*, through which sensory and reflective dimensions of dress objects give rise to taste patterns over time. With this term, I am addressing both the 'symbolic surfaces' of dress styles *and* the sensory experiences that have shaped past, present and future preferences. In this sense, past dress practices work like anchoring points that aid people in the processes of making their daily selections, and in their future, imagined scenarios of dressing.

*Sartorial systems*

Instead of relating all explanatory frameworks for dress practice as being linked to logics of 'fashion', I see people as being engaged with various 'landscapes' of reference. That is, how people make use of bricolaging in the way that they mix styles and references in order to 'feel right'. If I consider Entwistle's framework, I can see that she distinguishes between 'fashion', 'dress' and 'clothes' while calling, at the same time, for the development of a more universal principle for dress practice (2000:112/117). On the other hand, she argues that style is always a mediation of social factors, and further, that this puts limitations on how much can be explained through the lens of Western fashion (ibid:49). What I propose is that it would be fruitful to look at people's navigation through their dressing dilemmas by distinguishing more clearly what kinds of references they engage in their wardrobes. In my attempts to try and understand this, I came across sociologist Ann Swidler's book, *Talk of Love. How Culture Matters* (2001). In her book, she interviews various people about how they talk about love. Here, she sees how various cultural scripts effect the way they do, 'scripts' like Christianity or new wave spiritualism. Within these scripts, there are inherent skills, codes and practices that people re-enact. What Swidler comes to realise is that people do not re-enact cultural scripts in the same way: there are variations, combinations and differences, which can neither be explained through the Weberian argument that culture influences action, nor be explained through a Parsonian analysis of culture as norms and values. Therefore, according to Swidler, it is very important to look at *how* people use culture to learn how to be particular kinds of persons. How they, so to speak, inhabit particular cultural 'repertoires', and anchor themselves in their ideas of self, and in their day-to-day practices. For example, Swidler describes how dilemmas that are related, for example, to how to perform a marriage can generate individual solutions which are:

*"wide variations and sometimes dramatic shifts in theories and techniques for solving these dilemmas, even while those varied solutions share a common orientation to the institution itself"* (Swidler 2001:201)

Swidler bases these considerations on the general perception of culture:

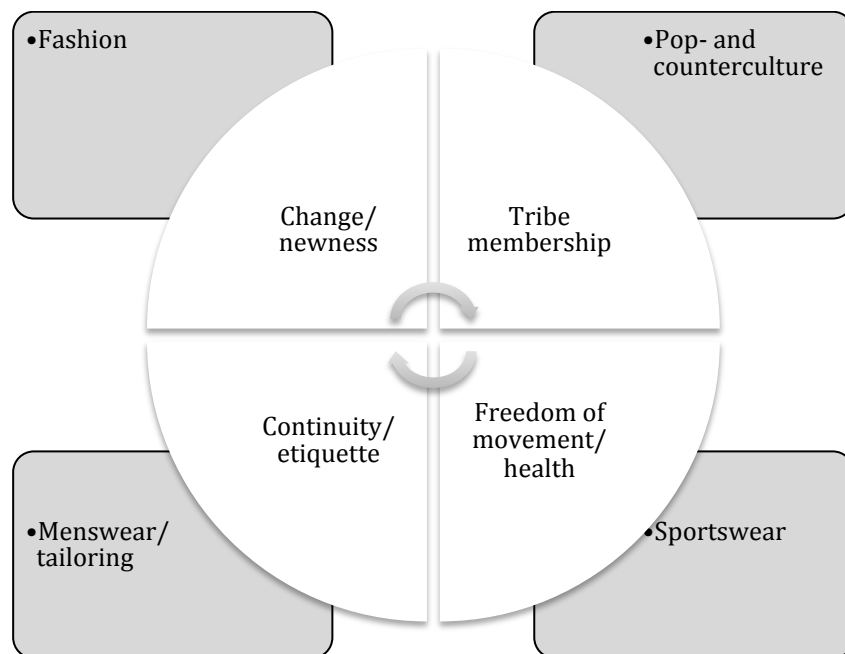
*"as repertoire, which one can be more or less good at performing [...] 'a set of skills' which only sometimes 'work'"* (ibid:24-25)

What is enormously interesting to me is the way that Swidler perceives this as a bricoleurian act, in which people build their practices on a set of available 'repertoires'

or cultural scripts. How they can easily engage with more scripts at the same time, and combine them. And how some scripts are more dominant in their setting than others, which shows in their practices. What I will propose is to view the way people navigate through their dressing dilemmas through this optics. Thus, sartorial systems such as 'fashion', 'pop- and counter-culture', 'menswear/tailoring' or 'sportswear' that I see as dominating the social structures around my informants might be seen as cultural scripts or 'repertoires' with which each informant engages in his own personal way and combination, in order to 'solve' given dressing dilemmas. When I say 'sartorial systems', I am referring to the way that Barthes (1983) and later on, Kawamura (2005) have defined fashion as a system or an institutionalised network of agencies. I regard each of these systems as having its own distinct historical point of departure and reasoning, its own ritualised and institutional skills, codes and practices, and its own networks and agencies. While 'fashion' as a system is currently overly dominant, the other systems have a huge effect on people's dress practices as well – at least the way I see the situation. For example, the system of pop- and sub-culture reflects ideas of authenticity and membership, and of opposing mainstream culture, or at least opposing adult's way of thinking, as has been argued by Hebdige (1979) and later on, Hodkinson (2002). Interestingly enough, Hodkinson has showed how members of subcultures in Great Britain maintain their membership throughout their entire lives, and stay true to the 'life philosophy' of a given musical genre (Hodkinson & Bennet (eds.) 2012). With 'skills, codes and practices' that are particular to fashion, I might refer to Rocamora, who has defined fashion as inherently Parisian, and as being connected to the development of industrialism and capitalism in the Western world. From there follows a line of bodily practices that derive from figures such as 'Parisian chic', or 'la passante', which are connected very distinctly to the city of Paris (Rocamora 2009). In relation to the system of 'menswear/tailoring', writers like Hollander have demonstrated how this system builds on virtues of sameness and continuity, and not on change and difference, such as fashion. How the skills, codes and practices that are characteristic of this system evolve around virtues like the elegance of the detail and the perfect fit, and the 'perfect gentleman', who is aware of etiquette and immaculate dressing (Hollander 1994). The system of 'sportswear', on the other hand, derives from a preoccupation with health and exercise that emerged in the course of the 19th Century, and actually expresses an antipathy towards the whole 'genesis of the suit', which was regarded as being constrictive of the body and the mind by, for example, the so-called 'Men's Dress Reform Party' of the 1930s (Malossi & Abrams 2000). After WW2, American Sportswear came to exert a huge influence on casualwear, and has in many ways been transformed from

dress to wear for sports, and into dress for everyday life. Below, I have suggested how it might be possible to regard each of these 'repertoires' as systems of 'skills, codes and practices' - all of them having been ritualised, to various extents, throughout the Western history of dress. What I propose is that seeing the symbolic codes in people's bricoleurian act of dressing, in this way, could pave the way for a more universal view on dress practice, in which all persons in all cultures draw on a given set of 'repertoires', and then re-enact them on the basis of their own individual taste preferences, which are embodied, affected by personal ideas about aesthetics, and developed over time. The model as it is displayed here is quite simplistic, and could certainly be elaborated further than how I have done so. However, I have found that it would be all too space-consuming for me to do so here, and therefore I will make use of it as a roughly set filter, through which I can understand the referential orientation of my sample.

### SARTORIAL SYSTEMS MODEL



- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Fashion                | <p><i>origin:</i> 14th Century Burgundian Courts; 19th Century Haute Couture; 20th Century R-T-W/fast fashion</p> <p><i>codes:</i> Showpiece from catwalks; R-T-W version of catwalk styles; the €5 T-shirt</p> <p><i>skills and practices:</i> Change/newness; first-mover on trends; Parisian chic</p> <p><i>consumer group:</i> well-off people; youth</p> |
| Pop-<br>counterculture | <p><i>origin:</i> Late 19th Century modernist avant-garde movements; Post WW2 anti-establishment; Britain/US</p> <p><i>codes:</i> Bricolage of dress objects from various groupings in society, like workers, ethnic groups, high society, etc.</p> <p><i>skills and practices:</i> Tribe membership; anti-establishment; subversion of the dominant</p>      |

	<i>consumer group</i> : youth
Menswear/ tailoring	<i>origin</i> : Early 19th Century Britain <i>codes</i> : The male suit; blazer, tie, shirt. From WW2: the female suit <i>skills and practices</i> : Stability, quality, etiquette; the elegance lies in the detail <i>consumer group</i> : adults
Sportswear	<i>origin</i> : 19th Century upper class, Britain; 20th Century jet set, US <i>codes</i> : Riding costume, golf wear, tennis outfit, soccer T-shirts, outerwear, sweatpants and hoodies <i>skills and practices</i> : practicality; freedom of movement; hi-tech functionalities <i>consumer group</i> : all age groups

## Methodology

To sum it up, I wish to address the following in this part of the thesis:

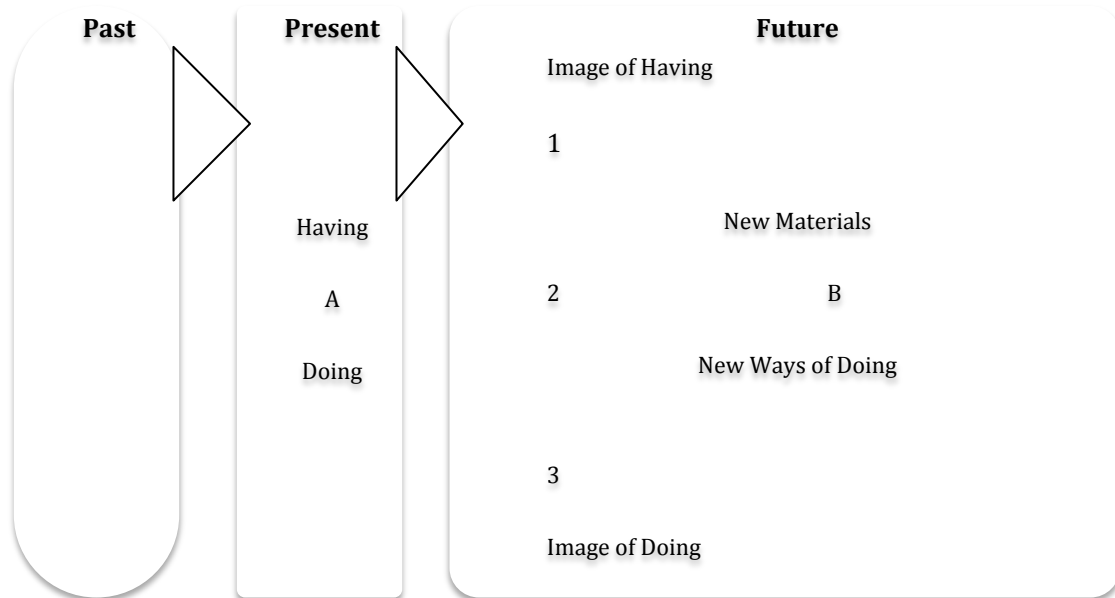
1. How do I develop a methodology that can operationalise my idea of dress practice as embodied and relational?
2. How do the models of *sensory anchoring* and *sartorial systems* play a role in the dress practices of my sample?

Method, in short: I started out conducting my sessions with the informant, Torben, as a pilot project, with the aim of developing an interview method that could help to identify my objectives and build my framework. To be honest, I had planned to follow this up with a study of a group of 25-30 men. However, the more I looked at the material I had, the more it became clear to me that the micro-level of people's dress practice is very poorly described or theorised. As such, this first part of the thesis has to be viewed as a grounded theory process, where I have built my hypothesis and framework on the basis of what I encountered. I did this in way that lies very much in line with Whiteman and her description of a study of Cree hunters in Canada (Whiteman & Cooper 2011). In the case of Whiteman, she slipped in the snow during the first days of her fieldwork, fell into an icy cold river, and could have died. She was reminded that she was not only studying hunters, but was studying just as much how these hunters interacted with the physical

environment in which they lived. These realisations made her rethink the study completely. She then started collecting data and began an open coding process in a search for themes or parameters that affected the lives of the hunters whom she was studying. Even if my change of direction was in no way triggered by a such a shock, it became clear to me that I needed to look very closely at what I had encountered in Torben's wardrobe. A narrative was written in order to better understand the patterns of the material, and a list of 'positive' and 'negative' words was compiled in order to find clusters that could help build themes. I did this by building on my observations during the first sessions, where I would pay much attention to the space of the wardrobe itself: to how it was organized, to what the closet looked like, and to how the whole scenario was connected with the behaviour of the informant. I also paid attention to the shape, colour, fabric texture, trimming details, etc., of every single dress object. From this, the move from a purely individual level to contextualisation began, following the 'snail' model that has been described by Strauss & Corbin (1990). As this work developed, another informant, Jonas, was studied as a theoretical sampling, in order to compare patterns and themes and to adjust my use of applied methods in the wardrobe sessions.

#### *Use, space, time and the body*

In my wardrobe sessions, I wanted to establish a methodology that could operationalise my theoretical frameworks. Shove et al.'s model of 'having' and 'doing' jibes neatly with the view of the wardrobe as a space where use, space and time intersect, touching upon how people's negotiations and re-evaluations, with regard to the dress objects they possess, take place in a constant and ever-evolving flux of 'wardrobe moments', where they make their daily selections. As Shove et al. emphasise, such a processual view is not targeted at distinguishing between what people say, on the one hand, and what they actually do. Rather, this view underscores how these two become interconnected, in ever-unfolding processes, as people go about living their lives, and as they go about doing their daily routines.



A Present practice

B Future practice

1 New or not yet acquired materials required for imagined ways of doing

2. Having and doing in balance, now and for the immediate future

3 New or not yet realized ways of doing

(Shove et al. 2007:36)

Shove et al.'s model, showing how the relation between 'having' ('needs') and 'doing' (practices) is temporal and dynamic, anchoring the relation between subject and object in past, present and future.

I found this approach to be very interesting and relevant, since it faithfully mirrors the idea of the wardrobe as a 'museum of selves': past, present and future selves, which are developed over time through what people store in their wardrobes (having), and how they use it (doing). It also reflects the way people negotiate matters of appearance and appropriateness through images of having or doing: what new dress objects people dream of purchasing, or how they wish to use already owned ones in order to 'feel right'.

I wished to apply methods in my wardrobe sessions that could help bring out these fluent processes, and therefore employed the overall idea of the *wardrobe biography*. The idea was based on the way Turney & Harden (2007) and Cole (2000) have showed how past wardrobes continue to affect what people wear. Through a museological perspective, Turney has showed how 'ordinary' women have appropriated 'fashionable' floral-printed dresses into their own wardrobes, thus displaying how they have made these dresses their own through use. Through interviewing people and quoting from media, Cole similarly displays how dress objects worn in the past continue to have a huge importance for the wearer. In this case, Cole displays how gay men throughout the 20th Century have used particular dress objects to be identified by others, while

simultaneously concealing their sexual orientation to outsiders. In this way, both studies call attention to how people connect to their past through dress objects in the wardrobe, to how, through talking about their past wardrobes, people recall how they used to be and how this makes them what they are now. Because I regard this aspect to be missing out or under-researched in much writing about fashion and dress, I have seen it as imperative that this should be implemented in my interview technique. So, in order to learn more about how my informants are affected by their past wardrobes, I made it a key guideline in my interviews to ask about dates of purchase. This way, all dress objects in the wardrobe were seen through a time perspective, paving the way for patterns with regard to changes in their sartorial style throughout their life. Starting with the wardrobe session with Torben, I asked him about the year of purchase for all objects. As I became more interested in the issue of time after these sessions, I conducted a timeline interview with him in his kitchen after a complete mapping out of his wardrobe. In this interview, I would go deeper into the various phases of his life, to which his wardrobe had continuously been adjusted.

However, even if the kitchen interview left me with many interesting perspectives on Torben's use of dress, I found that it became too detached from the dress objects themselves. Standing in the wardrobe, where the actual dress objects would be at hand so that we could touch them and look at them, worked much better. Leaving the wardrobe paved the way for a kind of rational and purpose-oriented reasoning that was lacking in any sensory perspective. Therefore, I tried to make adjustments when the time came for my sessions with Jonas. At the first session, I would go quickly through his wardrobe closets, just to get an idea about what he had and how he stored it. After this, I conducted an interview with him that was based on five photos he had sent me, showing what he had chosen to wear each day throughout a single work week. At this interview, themes came up that were related to both sensory experience and to reflections on appropriateness and self-perception. I could therefore start the coding process after the first interview, mapping out themes that seemed to matter to Jonas. These themes were used in the subsequent wardrobe session, which I tried to structure very stringently according to a biographic principle. However, it turned out that such stringency did not entirely work out in our conversation, since Jonas would often jump around in the time sequence, for example, when he compared one dress object to another.

To sum it up, I tried throughout the sessions with Torben and Jonas to develop a method that was based on the principle of the wardrobe biography. I found that I was becoming



more and more occupied with the way that various dress objects, purchased during various phases of their lives, were connected across time and space. And that addressing the temporal aspect of their wardrobes opened up understandings of the processes that were going on in their daily dress practices. I tried conducting a timeline interview with Torben in his kitchen after the wardrobe sessions, but this opened up for rationalisations that were not directly connected with the dress objects - thereby, the sensory aspect got neglected. Therefore, I tested whether it would work out if I made Jonas take photos of his attire during one work week, and start the first sessions by talking about these photos, as a kind of pre-mapping. This worked out better, since we were looking at photos of his dress objects while we talked, and themes came up that I could recognise as we conducted a mapping out of his wardrobe in the subsequent session.

This way, my method deviates radically from the ones applied by Warkander or Woodward in their studies of people and their wardrobes, since they have followed their informants through a longer period of time and 'immersed' themselves in their field work. In contrast to this traditional ethnographic/anthropological approach, all of my sessions were short-lasting and highly structured, and I only went to meet my informants a very few times. As such, my investigations can be aligned with the experimental, cooperative orientation of pragmatic action research, with a focus on experiential learning, such as that suggested by Johansson & Linnhult (2008), but in the present case, I have built my hybrid method on the basis of so-called 'innovative' methods within user-centred design research. As has been argued by Shove et al. (2007:119-23), these methods are often built on exemplary studies of users, and are formed on principles similar to laboratory experiments: short-lasting, intense, and based on transparent methods for try-outs, tests and repetition. According to Binder & Brandt (2008) such formats aid in the development and exploration of possible new design programs. Most often, they are organized as workshops with user participation. Initially referring to them as 'partner-engaged design', Binder & Brandt suggest how such workshops - or as they call them, 'design:labs' - constitute an entanglement of method and outcome, and thereby stand as '*exemplary processes of inquiry* rather than as finalised results' (ibid:19). As such, the format of the design:lab conveys a common ground for the 'backstage' activities of the design studio, and for traditional focus group meetings that are structured by researchers.

I have used this approach because I have not been interested in making a representative study of a particular sample, but rather of exploring and enquiring what takes place in the space of the wardrobe. I have built my method on Binder & Brandt's idea of a 'controlled environment', in which I could make 'careful recordings of experiments', together with my informants, with the aim of establishing an *open moment*; through this snapshot-like format, I have tried to capture and understand a glimpse of time in my informants' dress practices, well aware that after this, there will be future moments that lie beyond the scope of this project. In this way, I have aimed at exploring together, with my informants, how this 'open moment' in their wardrobes connects to their past, present and future dress practices. In connection with this, the idea of letting Jonas document his attire during a work week derives from the field of user-centred design research as well, where it is known as the 'cultural probes' method. Basically, the method reflects the same methodological approach as design:lab. Instead of the classical anthropological immersion in the field, the idea is to facilitate self-documentation among users of their everyday routines and practices, and then convey this material into actual design ideas. Originally developed by Gaver et al., the method constituted a

*"design-led approach to understanding users that stressed empathy and engagement. Probes are collections of evocative tasks meant to elicit inspirational responses from people - not comprehensive information about them, but fragmentary clues about their lives and thoughts. We suggested the approach was valuable in inspiring design ideas for technologies that could enrich people's lives in new and pleasurable ways"*

(Gaver et al. 2004:1)

In short, cultural probes are tool boxes provided by (design) researchers to users, which consist of, for example, a Polaroid camera, a diary, postcards with questions, maps, or other relevant objects for self-documentation. Along with the technological development of mobile phones, 'mobile probing' has been applied as well, and this is what I have made use of in this project: letting Jonas take a picture with his mobile camera of what he was wearing each day, and forwarding it to my mail box. Together with this, he was provided with a wardrobe diary for registering comments and thoughts. By applying this method, I believe that I fuelled a process of reflection which was already taking place in the case of Jonas, and these reflections became easier to talk about since we were looking closely at how he actually chose to dress for work.

According to Mättelmäki, this way of documenting people's everyday experiences issues from a rising awareness, among design researchers, of the fact that people do not base decisions on rational and logic reasoning alone, but that emotions - such as memory, tactile experience and aesthetic experience, etc. - play a vital role in people's interaction with design objects (thus the term 'emotional design' defined by Norman (2004) and Jordan (2000)). In her PhD dissertation, *Design Probes* (2007), Mättelmäki places the method of probing in the field of *participatory design*. Originally, the field was developed in Scandinavia as a democratic, user-engaging way of empowering workers and their 'tacit' routines by implementing their experiences in, for example, work processes going on at factories. As such, participatory design stood in contrast to an American tradition for engaging users as test groups of a kind for product adjustments. Herewith, the field exemplifies an overall shift in focus from product to process that can be spotted from the early 1990's and onwards (Schuler & Namioka 1993; Sanders & Stappers 2008). Mättelmäki characterises the methods that are engaged in participatory design as being:

*"intended to understand people's feelings, pleasures and dreams [...] tools to help the users to express themselves through metaphors and associations, sometimes revealing very delicate and irrational motives"*

(Mättelmäki *ibid*:31)

As such, she argues how the method of cultural probes is widely used to create understandings for design workshops, which are important to understand in order to distinguish participatory design methods from other kinds of qualitative research. Thus, she shows how Hanington distinguishes human-centred design through the following categories:

*traditional methods*; such as market research, focus groups, surveys, questionnaires, archival methods or trace methods: aims at confirming or disproving things already known

*adapted methods*; observational methods such as ethnographic methods, video ethnography, cultural inventory or HCI: aims at identification and explication of phenomena

*innovative methods*: such as design workshops, collage, card sorting, cognitive mapping, velcro modelling, or visual studies: aims at developing visual and verbal knowledge for delineating and discovering design opportunities

(Hanington 2003 in: *ibid*:30-34)

Following these arguments, I see my project as being positioned between the latter two categories; even if the thesis is composed as an ethnography, I have found it relevant to engage with some of the so-called 'innovative' methods, for a number of reasons. First, I believe that the probes from Jonas helped me to understand some of his aspirations, his daily routine-like reasoning, and indeed certain sensory experiences, in relation to his dress practice. Even if he actually managed to forget his wardrobe diary somewhere and never found it again, the probes worked out very well as a framework for shared understandings, before the actual wardrobe sessions took place. As such, the 'open moment' that I encountered in the space of his wardrobe was augmented in time and space, and I was able to cast some light on what actually went on in his daily life and his routines of dressing.

Much more important, though, is that I found these 'innovative' methods to be relevant in relation to a deeper exploration of Entwistle's understanding of dressing as a 'bodily situated practice'. I was searching for ways in which I might address such issues during the wardrobe sessions and avoid purely sign-related, utilitarian reflections. What I ended up applying was a method used by designers that is termed *clustering*. According to [oxforddictionaries.com](http://oxforddictionaries.com) (retrieved on March 18, 2014) the word cluster means "*a group of similar things or people positioned or occurring closely together*". Synonymous with cluster are words like 'bunch', 'clump', 'collection', 'mass', 'knot', 'group', and 'bundle'. This correlates well with the processual approaches of Ingold (2008) and Hernes (2008) who also speak of time periods, events or objects as being 'entanglements' or 'knots'. In this way, the word in itself appeared to connect well to my model of 'sensory anchoring'.

According to Gelting & Friis, who have tried to map out methods engaged by designers, *clustering* is a method of visual and tactile mapping of colours, textures, shapes, or various sources of inspiration. The act of clustering often takes place at the design studio, typically on mood boards, where fabric samples, colour palettes, pictures and other kinds of objects are placed in categories or timelines, for the purpose of detecting visual and tactile patterns of coherence (Gelting & Friis 2011). In this way, the clusters

aid designers in making rapid design decisions. The technique of sorting, or of categorising, is well known in design research, as well as in qualitative research. Within design research, it has been approached by, for example, Wurman, who suggests that in order to grasp the world, people sort all kinds of information through five levels; Location, Alphabet, Time, Category and Hierarchy - hence his term, LATCH (Wurman 1989). A similar approach can be found in the so-called 'repertory grid' method, originally developed within the area of psychology in the 1950s to help people recall and understand trauma. Basically, the method builds on sorting processes, and on the idea that if people are asked to sort objects, people, events or activities through various 'grids' such as making a ranking, assigning grades, for example, ranging from 1-10, or making dichotomies, they will reach new levels of understandings through finding patterns of coherence or difference (Tan & Hunter 2002). Within recent decades, the repertory grid method has been applied in the field of design research as an 'innovative' method, such as in the work of Bang. In her PhD thesis, *Emotional Values of Applied Textiles*, she uses the repertory grid method to explore decision-making processes among textile designers: processes that are often based on tacit, emotive valuations of, for example, tactility and textures (Bang 2010). In this way, Bang's project stands as a textbook example of how to address sensory aspects of design such as touch, sound, smell, sight or taste, through facilitating various sorting processes, together with informants (in her case, designers). The term, 'clustering', is also known within qualitative research. Miles & Huberman define clustering as a tool for analysing fieldwork data, based on the way 'we all have cognitive frames that let us clump things rapidly' (Miles & Huberman 1994). Equally, Spradley's taxonomies work as a similar aiding tool for researchers to code patterns of coherence (Spradley 1979).

What is important to notice here is how clustering is applied *during* the field work in the 'innovative' methods, while it is applied as analysing tool *after* the field work in qualitative research. With the aim of addressing both sensory and other experiential aspects of dressing, my interview technique has been to constantly ask my informants to form clusters - categories - of dress objects. Altogether literally, I would ask them to place various categories of dress objects in heaps on their bed, and sort them into subcategories according to various parameters. As such, the idea of the wardrobe biography can be viewed as a timeline cluster. Other clusters would be types of dress objects like 'shirts', 'trousers', 'footwear' or other kinds of categories, which could be explored further by asking the informants to form subcategories. In relation to this, I have tried to implement the sorting principles of hierarchy, dichotomy and ranking from

the repertory grid method. In the wardrobe sessions with Torben in particular, I made several try-outs that I eventually decided not to apply again. At first, I made him build a hierarchy of his wardrobe. I asked him to start with the category of dress object that he liked the most, and then to move downwards from there. However, I found that nothing in particular was contributed by this approach and that hierarchic positions of active and passive dress objects were emerging all the while as we spoke, looked at and touched the objects together, regardless of whether there was any overall hierarchy or not. However, clustering objects in subcategories seemed to make sense, insofar as it paved the way for discussions of parameters like comfort, size, fit, and other sensory aspects, as well as more utilitarian ones. As described by Gelting & Friis, such visual and tactile 'mapping' processes established patterns that are obvious to the eye; this enabled both Torben and Jonas to elaborate on taken-for-granted ideas, terms or practices, as well as on their own sensory experiences. In this way, I have tried to explore more deeply the sensory, tactile dimension of people's wardrobes that has been described by Warkander.

To summarise, I have found it fruitful to apply the so-called 'innovative' methods from design research in my qualitative study for more reasons. By applying the clustering method as part of the interview technique, I am aiming at empowering my informant's own reasoning, experiences, and ideas. Through such dislocation, I regard this study as been commensurate with Binder et al.'s proposition of design research as 'exemplary processes of inquiry rather than as finalised results', where method and outcome become entangled. Second, the use of exemplary user studies is widely recognised within user-centred methods, because of the focus on 'empirical examination of fundamental principles that lead to developing theories about design' (Frankel & Racine 2010:4). It is in this context that I begin to catch a glimpse of my combination of innovative and qualitative methods.

To sum up the whole process of my field work, I conducted two wardrobe sessions with the informant, Torben, in January-February of 2010, each one lasting approximately 1.5 hours. Shortly after this, I came back and conducted a timeline interview with him that lasted approximately 1 hour, in an attempt to map out the development of his wardrobe as it unfolded throughout the course of his adult life. In November 2010 I sent him a written narrative of my coding of themes and perspectives, and went back to interview him again about his reflections. This was done mainly to identify further aspects of relevance that I might choose to carry with me into my further work (see fig. 1). In the

case of Jonas, I had asked him previously to take photos of what he was wearing each day during one work week in the spring of 2011. Shortly after this, in May-June of the same year, I conducted two sessions in his home. In the first session, which lasted approximately 1.5 hours, he briefly showed me his wardrobe, and then we talked about the photos in his kitchen. When I came back for the next session, I had the themes from this interview in the back of my head. This second session lasted approximately 1.5 hours (see fig. 2). Each informant was studied through short-lasting, exemplary experiments for subsequent testing, evaluation and further use that I refer to as 'wardrobe sessions' (see fig. 3). Each session consisted of a short-lasting 'open moment', together with my informants, which was built largely on the methods 'clustering' and 'the wardrobe biography', which I had developed on the basis of my preliminary framework (see fig. 4).



Fig 1: Method design for the study of Torben



Fig. 2: Method design for the study of Jonas

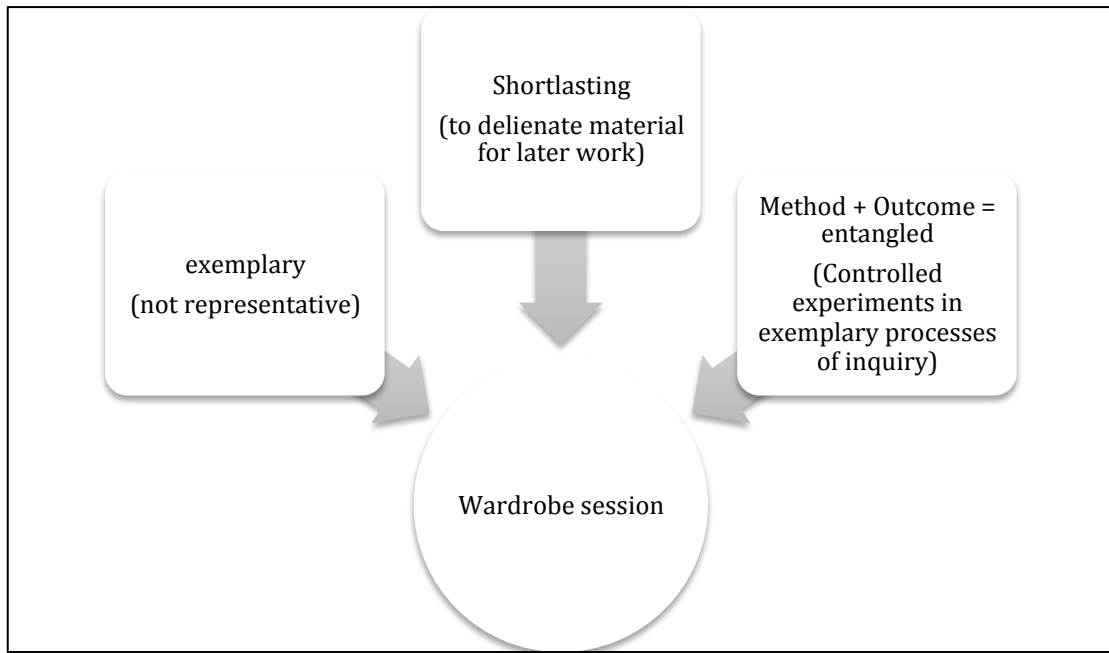


Fig. 3: Method design of the wardrobe session, as based on so-called 'innovative methods' from design research

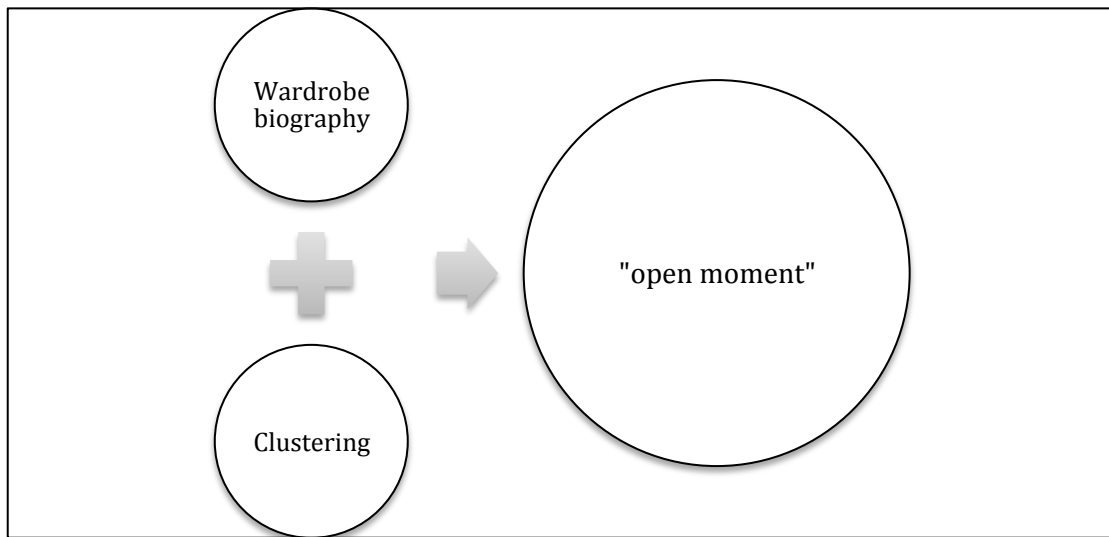


Fig. 3: Method components in each wardrobe session

*Ethnography and exemplary studies*

Throughout these 'open moments', I have followed the use of exemplary studies in much user-centred design research by taking my point of departure in the micro-ethnography of Garfinkel (1984). In Garfinkel's study of the informant Agnes, who had undergone a sex-change operation, he questions ideas of sociological reasoning by looking at how



"members [such as Agnes] produce stable, accountable practical activities i.e. social structures of everyday activities' on the basis of 'taken for granted, background features of a person's situation"

(ibid:172/185)

The case of Agnes can be seen as being in line with Tarlo's young Indian college students or Hansen's young Zambian women, in the sense that they are all running a significant risk of facing social ruin in the event of disclosure. Hence, I am interested in Garfinkel's concept of *passing*; with this, he addresses how Agnes needs to 'pass' for a woman, with the aid of 'passing devices': explanations, evasive manoeuvres, dress style, movements and gestures of the body. As such, his term clearly calls to mind the 'clothing competences' of Hansen, with which her Zambian informants act and dress according to ideas of appropriateness.

In Garfinkel's study of Agnes, he has made use of what he calls 'literary observations', with the aim of capturing 'seen but unnoticed common sense world of everyday life'. This entails that, much in line of Whiteman, his coding process has been very open, and his theoretical framework has emerged out of a sensitivity towards the material, as opposed to a reductionist tradition of 'documenting underlying patterns' (ibid:95). What I have done in my interviews with Torben and Jonas is to approach them with this kind of open view to what I would experience, and as such, I do not consider my field work to be a process of documenting, but rather of *encountering*. My semi-structured interviews can be seen through the anthropologist tradition of, for example, Spradley, who perceives the informant as 'teacher', and the researcher as the one who learns. In the coding process of what I encountered, Spradley has been influential in the way I have tried to understand 'taken-for-granted' expressions, terms, biases, preferences, and sensory experiences of my informants (Spradley 1979). This means that, for example, when Torben tells me that he finds a dress object to be 'practical', I have tried to ask very open, maybe even stupid questions, and have made use of laddering in order to incite him to elaborate on what he means by this term. I have also followed the reasoning behind any cluster Torben and Jonas might have formed, in the sense that they have named all the categories and subcategories themselves. In this way, I have approached my field work in much the way that Burawoy advocates 'neither distance nor immersion but dialogue' (Burawoy in: Burawoy et al. 1991: 4). I further see my wardrobe sessions through Burawoy's framework of *the interpretive case method*,

through which he 'regards the micro content as a setting in which a particular "macro" principle [...] reveals itself' (ibid:6). Thus, macro structures can be explored and examined through an ethnomethodological approach to a micro setting, such as the wardrobe.

### *Sample*

I believe that I could find aspects of relevance to my objectives in any wardrobe of any person. However, because of my interest in dressing as an act that dramatises societal tensions (as posed by i.e. Davis 1994), I was looking for a grouping that I would find to have particular dressing-related dilemmas, which I could easily access. I was quite disinterested in women, particularly younger women, since they seemed to be the focal point of related studies such as the ones conducted by Woodward (2007), Guy & Banim (Guy et al. 2001), or Klepp (2001). And since, all things considered, this grouping has been the focus of attention of much research in fashion and dress, largely because of the feminine connotations associated with the whole area (as argued by, for example, Hollander 1994; Lipovetsky 1994; and Entwistle 2000). I wanted to contribute elsewhere and therefore decided to study a group of men. Even if my aim was not to make any kind of representative study, I still thought that it appeared sensible to find informants who were so similar that I would be able to find patterns of coherence - as such, the grouping I finally chose as my sample can be viewed as being exemplary.

Early on in the project, I became aware of a grouping termed as *free agents* (Strandgaard et al. 2008). The term points to changes in the job market, particularly those that are going on in the expanding area of creative industries, that are giving rise to a new, time-bound kind of engagement between employer and employee, calling short-term consultancy contracts to mind. Thus, there is an increasing segment of the work force that is being hired as freelancers or short-time contractors. I find this to be interesting in relation to my research topic, because these changes have to be seen as effectuating the dressing-related dilemmas of such a grouping. As opposed to the more or less formalized dress codes in companies, which build on the 'taken-for-granted' values in a given company culture (Schein 2010), 'free agents' operate on their own, and accordingly need to define their appearance themselves. I see this through the way that Clark & Salaman have described how consultants, in particular, become 'systems of

persuasion', because they need to convince clients of their quality through the art of impression management. Hence 'their economic successes are dependent upon the extent to which they can make credible to clients their claim to offer something special' (Clark & Salaman 1998:19). Taking my inspiration in this, I made the preliminary assumption that men working in this area would have to negotiate matters of age through their appearance. Because of the encounter between creativity and business that is taking place in the creative industries sector (as described by i.e. Pratt 2000/2004; Moeran & Pedersen 2011), I presumed that I would find dressing-related dilemmas concerning the span between appearing to have a certain level of authority and yet, at the same time, appearing young-minded and 'creative'. And that I would accordingly find dressing dilemmas, as such, that involved all of my 'sartorial systems'. To a certain extent, this was confirmed through media discussions of so-called 'Grups' in Denmark and abroad; the term is taken from an episode of the sci-fi TV-series, *Star Trek*, in which there is a planet inhabited by children who name the Star Trek crew 'Grups', which is a contraction of 'Grown-Ups'. In recent media debates, the term has been used to describe 30-45 year old people who negotiate age through lifestyle habits such as the way that they dress<sup>1</sup>. Thus, their dressing-related dilemma concerns a widening gap between biological age and 'age-identity', as has been described within the research on gerontology (Coupland 2009a/2009b); this leads to a reconstruction of beliefs about age in present society (Ng 1998).

In Denmark, this debate has evolved in ways that particularly concerns men who were going to work dressed in attire that was perceived to be inappropriate and too youthful by their older colleagues; dress objects like trainers, hoodies and baggy pants. I apprehend this through the perspective of Crane (2000), who has argued that masculine identity was traditionally defined through work or production rather than through consumption, which was seen as a more feminine preserve. And that this pushed men into the act of bricolage, because they needed to define for themselves what was meaningful to wear. This can be aligned with what Ziehe calls the 'narcissistic sensibility' of post-war generations: a lack of coherence in society that causes especially young people to seek membership in, for example, subcultures or culture groupings through appearance, attitude and consumer goods (Ziehe 1982). Such a narcissistic sensibility can be seen to have affected masculinity in particular, as it paved the way for the so-called 'masculine crisis'. This crisis, which was fuelled by a combination of anti-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://nymag.com/news/features/16529/> retrieved on January 5, 2011

war protest movements and gay- and women's-rights movements in the 1970's, is seen as a key to understanding the changes that affected male role models since that time, resulting in a line of media-created characters like the 'soft' man, the 'new' man, the 'new lad', the 'übersexual', and the 'retrosexual' (Bly 1990; Constantino 2000; Gauntlett 2002; Solomon-Godeau 1997; Lönnquist 2001; Malossi & Abrams (eds.) 2000; Morgan 1993; Nixon 1996). As such, I see more dilemmas related to dressing that are at play for men who are 'free agents'. This is dressing dilemmas concerning, on the one hand, issues of age and ageing, and on the other, issues of gender.

What all this means is that I was looking for informants that were very close to what anthropologists define as 'home', as opposed to 'field/away'; these men could very well be my friends, or my acquaintances, whom I would study more closely through 'the ethnographic lens' (Burawoy et al. 1991). They are approximately my age; they are knowledge-economy workers, like myself; they live in the same area as I do; and they belong to approximately the same social class as I do. I therefore decided to find my 'free agents' among my own network of facebook friends.

To summarize, I was looking for a sample with particular dressing-related dilemmas, which could serve to operationalise my explanatory framework. Because I was highly concerned with issues of temporality, I became interested in the grouping called 'free agents', because they, in particular, need to negotiate matters of age and gender through their appearance. They had to be adults, approximately between 35-50. This was necessary because it is this age group that dominates the labour market of 'free agents', and because this age group would have some kind of 'wardrobe biography' that I could study. What I wanted to explore was how these men navigated between 'young' codes of, for example, subcultural styles, and 'adult' codes of menswear. I wanted to explore, furthermore, how these codes were embodied, and how they connected the past, present and future wardrobes of these men.

## INTO THE WARDROBES

### Torben

Torben hates fashion. Or at least, he is very critical about the whole phenomenon. If he ever had a style icon, I believe that it would have to be a cross between the indie rock band, *My Bloody Valentine*, and the Frankfurt school thinker, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. Before agreeing to be my first informant, Torben and I had had a discussion on facebook about fashion and 'signals'. This was because I had commented on an update where he wrote:

*"am really tired of hearing fashion- and lifestyle experts discuss how we all wear clothes to send out certain signals".*

(Torben on facebook: November 22, 2010)

After this, several comments turned up, sent by his facebook friends, such as *"I believe that I send out a much clearer signal when I take my clothes off"*, and *"Triangle players believe that God is triangular. Fashion people believe that people are occupied with fashion and think about it all the time"*. As I started interfering and questioning these claims, Torben wrote this to me:

*"But Else, you are making the same wrong conclusion as [friend x]. So I must repeat my very simple point: that we incidentally send out signals with our clothes is not the same as putting them on to send out signals. I very very rarely put on clothing to send out certain signals. I wear things that I believe suit me well and are practical for the situation. I even wear clothes that I do not particularly like, but have a distinct practical function. So unless you think that I am lying, you must revise your opinion about me, because I don't dress up to signal something in particular"*

It was after this that we agreed that I should come to his home and see his wardrobe - to discuss what he actually dresses up for, and what dressing means to him.

Torben is 45 years old and lives in an apartment in Copenhagen with his wife and daughter. At the time of the interview, he has a part-time position in a research project at the university, and free-lances as an art critic in a newspaper. This means that he spends his working hours at his university office, in his apartment, and around and about at meetings or public debates. His apartment is filled with bookshelves, and there are toys and other kids stuff lying around. This is an apartment of a busy family. It is neat, cosy and functional. In his bedroom, he shares a white wall-to-wall wardrobe closet with his wife. The closet consists of eight cabinets. Torben and his wife each have three cabinets, and share two where they store bed linens, towels, gloves, umbrellas, hats and other accessories. Torben has one cabinet with shelves and two with pegs. The latter contains laundry for the whole family that happens to be heaped up in the bottom, and on hangers, he stores his shirts, jackets, blazers, long-sleeved and short-sleeved T-shirts and trousers, all of these being hung on hangers. In the cabinet with shelves, he stores underwear, socks, knitwear, and sportswear. In the hallway, he keeps shoes and outerwear.

As we go through his dress objects throughout the two sessions, it becomes clear to me that he possesses a limited range of objects that are highly active, while larger parts of his wardrobe are very passive. We even find hangers with quite a few trousers that he has forgotten all about, because he hasn't used them for about a decade. This is somewhat surprising to me, since he has a very limited amount of space, but it's as if he has developed a very focused way of getting dressed, where there is a minimum of time loss. Thereby, passive objects are simply forgotten, and it appears as though he very rarely revises what he stores. Another thing that surprises me is that even if he 'hates fashion' and everything that has to do with it, he has a rather distinct style that is repeated back in time, which has to do with his adolescent years as a post-punk fan. As we talk our way back to that period through the dress objects that he shows me, I can tell that there are various phases of his life where he has made adjustments in his wardrobe, such as when he started working, and when he met his wife and they had their daughter.

As I started out asking him to base the entire session on a kind of wardrobe hierarchy, he chose to begin with his shirts. Then he moved on to, respectively, passive dress

objects, T-shirts, knitwear, trousers, footwear, and lastly, outerwear. The fact that he places the passive dress objects second in the hierarchy surprises me, but then I see how much he stores that he rarely uses. It's a lot.

*'Conservative'*

The most beloved dress object in Torben's wardrobe is a dusty green shirt that is now starting to wear out. He wore it for his wedding. It is in a cotton blend, somewhat slim-line in shape, and with a medium size collar. As he talks about the cherished shirt, he takes out a similar one that he purchased recently, because the original one is wearing out: the buttons are falling off, and the fabric is getting thinner and thinner in various places, and he doesn't know how to mend it, which saddens him. He has tried desperately to buy this similar shirt, but it will, according to Torben, never be the same.



Torben shows me his favourite green shirt. It is starting to wear out, and he has tried to find a similar one. But he's not altogether satisfied. It's just not the same!

We talk about this shirt during the first session, where Torben has placed his shirts, in three heaps, on his bed. One of the heaps is called 'party shirts'; this consists of only one shirt: a black shirt with an ornament-like flower pattern. The flowers are small, but rather colourful. This shirt is *only* used for partying, never for other events. In the middle is a heap that he calls 'everyday dress shirts (potentially party)'. It is in this heap

that he places his favourite shirt. There are quite a few similar shirts in a similar cut, and the colours are all very bright and monochrome. Torben insists that I remember that he actually has a lot of black shirts, but that these are in the laundry bin. The third heap he calls 'purely everyday'. This heap is much more varied in style and colour. There are quite a few white shirts in various cuts and sizes, and some with various kinds of patterns and colours.



The three heaps of shirts on Torben's bed. Of these, he prefers the ones from the category, 'party shirt', and 'everyday dressy shirts', about which he uses words like 'practical', 'firm', 'stiff', and 'funky'. The third heap, 'purely everyday', consists of items that he never wears outside of his home. These are described with words like 'pyjamas-like', 'soft', 'fluffy', 'flower power', 'hippie-like', 'too vague in colour', 'a bit too faded in colour', and 'pretty boring'.

It turns out that the dusty green shirt is the first shirt he ever purchased, way back in 2003. He started wearing shirts after he ended his student years and started working. Torben likes shirts to have collars and cuffs that are 'stiff' and 'firm'. Because then it doesn't curl up and need ironing. As we talk more about it, he explains how he 'feels a bit more cool when my shirt is stiff and firm'. On the contrary, there are quite a few shirts in his 'purely everyday' heap about which he says things like: 'then there's this feeling where I think, damn, this shirt, it's just too soft'. As I can tell by looking at them, they are probably also too big - at least the sizes are very irregular in this heap, so this might be the reason that he's not wearing them in public at all.

When Torben started wearing shirts, he started ironing them as well, which he still finds is a very 'adult' thing to do. For Torben, shirts are very related to growing up. Until he started working and had his daughter, he used to wear T-shirts, but he found that he



needed to distinguish himself from the students that he now found himself teaching at the university. He didn't want to be 'young with the young'. But at the same time, Torben doesn't want to look old either. This reminds him of his father, who always told him that when he would start work life, he should wear a shirt and tie to work. But Torben doesn't even know how to tie a tie. As we talk about this, Torben speaks of his wardrobe and dress practice as 'conservative'. When I ask him what he means by this term, he says:

**In all we talk about, I use the word 'conservative' in the sense of something that changes only slowly and gradually. So I buy a lot of the same. I go for what I already know. And I buy that again. So it's not necessarily conservative in the sense of being super-traditional clothing, with a tie and all. No, it's 'conservative' in the sense that yes, I stick to what ... I preserve ... what has already worked for me. And what I feel safe about.**

Torben has more dress objects, such as the green shirt, that have worn out or are starting to wear out, and his problem is that now, he cannot find the same again. As we speak more about this, it turns out that this 'sameness' he is looking for has a lot to do with fit, and with how it feels to wear certain objects. This was the case with, for example, a pair of shoes, which are now worn out and are no longer in his wardrobe. According to Torben, these were the best shoes he ever owned. Again, he has tried without much luck to find a similar pair. I ask him more about the original pair, and he tells me that he liked that the noses were square-ish, because he has quite broad feet. The heel was also square-ish, and he describes the shape as a combination of a Beatles-boot and a dress shoe. Black with laces. Now he can only find pointy shoes in the shops, and this is very frustrating for him. Torben says:

**When something has worked out for me, I want to have the same again, and I don't give a fuck when I hear the fashion people saying that this was "so last year", and now it's next year.**

Similar feelings are expressed as we continue talking about a black overcoat that distinctly calls a sailor's jacket to mind; it is double-breasted, and of a thick woollen quality. He got it as a present from his wife, who loves coats and jackets. However, she did not like the coats he wore when they met; long overcoats that were purchased 2Hand, or a leather jacket, which he found to be 'bohemian' and with a 'nice patina', and she found ugly and shabby. As with the shirts, he likes how this coat 'has this firmness - it still has a shape'. As we talk more, he tells me that he likes how this coat has a kind of 'moulded shape' that he can step into, and be formed by. Conversely, he is not content with a rain jacket that 'follows my body'. In this way, there are fabric qualities and

shapes that are repeated again and again throughout Torben's wardrobe. As we talk about this, he speaks about a kind of 'cohesion' in his style. A style, he claims, which is not something that he can put into words, even if we can see the how elements are repeated over and over.



Torben's favourite coat, sailor style, which is now getting worn out. He likes it because he says it has a kind of 'moulded shape', made out of firm and thick wool, so that he can kind of 'step into' this shape.

### *'Practical'*

The theme of repetition also characterises the way that Torben describes his daily dressing routines, using the term 'practical'. Throughout the sessions and interviews, he would mention this word several times, and it would always indicate something positive. His use of the term seemed to cover three various aspects of his wardrobe:

1. Individual dress objects or related objects such as the entire category of fleeces/pullovers/knitwear, and a rather expensive rain coat that was purchased in an outerwear-chain, with lots of pockets, glued seams, made out of a lightweight, breathable and windproof material. He describes such objects like this:

**I wear this to keep warm. Period, right. I don't think about it as a nice article of clothing. I think about this as *purely practical*.**

2. Shopping habits - the way he purchases more at the time if he finds something that he really likes, such as his black jeans. He has three pairs that are completely the same style, with boot-cut legs, and a medium-high waistline. As he speaks about this, he once again expresses his disdain for everything that has to do with fashion, and with shopping:

**I rarely purchase trousers, and I also buy good quality, lasting trousers, because then I can wear them for a year or two without having to think about it. Because, well, the basic fact is that I hate shopping. I just don't feel like doing it. I pull myself together and then I do it, but like, to be in a fitting room and to try out one thing after the other, this is to me a suffering on the level of washing floors or something: I really don't feel up to it. So this is also why, once I find a pair of trousers, I wear them only, and then I'm likely to buy three of the same kind because it works. And I wore the same for party, and I wore the same yesterday.**

Torben's ideal wardrobe is the one that Mickey Rourke has in the movie, "9-1/2 Weeks", with completely identical shirts and suits on hangers: ready to take out and wear, without any considerations. This ideal effects his shopping habits, and it also effects 'practical' aspect nr.

3: The daily process of getting dressed. Torben tries to keep this process as time-saving and trouble-less as possible. He therefore wears the same type of jeans for all occasions, because then he only needs to consider what shirt to wear. Here, he has a very rigid system that mirrors the clusters of shirts; there are specific shirts for working at home, some for working outside the home, and one for partying. The only concerted effort he makes is to try and keep the shirts in the 'everyday dress shirts' heap clean for meetings, teaching, or other events where he needs to perform in public.

#### *Passive dress objects*

Torben calls this category 'what hangs in the closet but is not used'. What it displays is, first and foremost, Torben's concerns about his body. When he was a late teenager, he would wear a style that referred to post-punk music, which he found 'bohemian'; a long hair-do, and tight-fitting T-shirts or turtle-neck pullovers, tight-fitting jeans, pointy shoes and 2Hand overcoats, all in black. Altogether a long and slim silhouette. During early adulthood, he would have some problems with his back that made him exercise a lot, which allowed him to continue wearing very tight-fitting dress objects like T-shirts, long-sleeved T-shirts, and jackets. When he became a father, he found that he had less

time for exercise, and moreover, that his body has simply changed into an adult man's body. This means that large parts of his passive dress objects now hang like grave markers of his lost, trim and young body, which he is not prepared to give up entirely. This is reflected in following remarks:

About a shirt in black crinkled fabric, he says:

**It means that it pulls together, and then when you button it, there's – all of a sudden – a hole between the buttons. And that's not very nice.**

About several white shirts, he says things like:

**Well, this has also become too small, ha-ha, around the waist, so that I look very fat. This one is ALSO too small around the waist (bites his lip), and this one is ALSO too small around the waist, so that I look really fat, and that's not very funny.**

About a black long-sleeved T-shirt in cotton:

**This one has actually also has become too small.**

The same is reflected when he takes out another black, long-sleeved T-shirt with satin pockets on the upper arms:

**Which is super-tight, so I cannot wear it at all.**

Torben continues to store these objects because he believes that when his daughter grows older, he'll have time to do more exercise and regain his lost shape. For now, he claims to have suppressed any memory of them, even if they are right before his eyes every day when he opens his closet. As we talk about it, he says that he knows it might be unrealistic, but he's not ready to accept it yet. But that the 'moulded shape' of his favourite jacket, and the 'stiff' and 'firm' material of his shirts might help him regain a T-shaped body.

As is the case in the 'purely everyday' shirt subcategory, there are dress objects in this category that are simply of the wrong size, and then there are some that he would like to wear but are not appreciated by his wife. This goes for, among other articles, a brown-and-white striped shirt in a synthetic stretch material, about which he says:

**I would actually like to wear this, but it's a little difficult, when my dear wife thinks that it's downright ugly. And that's what she thinks about this one, then I find I really have to say, well "fuck it", then I wear this at home, at least.**

As with his worn-out leather jacket, he finds that these objects have a 'nice patina' and also that it was quite cool to have torn holes in his jeans. But she disliked it, and he

would like her to appreciate what he wears. This category also holds a number of dress objects that he stores as memorabilia, such as a see-through white shirt with a flower pattern that he purchased while on vacation in Thailand, which he thought looked good on him during the two-week stay when he had a tan but looked stupid when he came back to Denmark. Finally, he pulls out ten pairs of trousers that he has forgotten all about. They are hanging on a trousers hanger behind his shirts. They are quite identical in their cut and in the fabric: loose-fitting, dressy trousers with pleats. He calls them 'soft trousers', and he purchased them during the 1990s. Back then, he wore them all the time, but now he only wears jeans. As I recall, these kinds of trousers were in fashion back then, but Torben never mentions this once. He only says that they feel 'too fluffy'.

### *Monochrome colours*

The oldest object in his wardrobe is a black T-shirt with the printed message: "Kafka didn't have too much fun, either". He purchased it back in the late 1980s, and wore it for many years while he studied philosophy and wore black and read Kafka's books. Torben is still very emotionally attached to this period, and to the music he heard back then.

During our talk in his kitchen, he says:

**I discovered a musical genre, and this is absolutely ground-breaking for me, which really really spoke to my feelings, and which matched wearing black. Which was all about discovering anger and pain and relating to that through music.**

During all of our sessions, Torben keeps telling me that he likes to wear black. How he used to wear only black, but then decided to break with this, through experimenting with wearing other colours. His passive dress objects include some of these experiments that didn't work out. He refers to the shirts as 'boring' or 'night-shirt-like'. Actually, there is one 'passive' shirt that he likes a lot for the colour and the pattern. It is a white shirt with a delicate purple *toile-de-jouy* pattern. I tell him that this is what it's called - he describes it as 'these animal drawings with lakes and stuff', and says how he likes the 'fish shell buttons' that are made out of metal and mother-of-pearl. What he dislikes is not so much the colour or the pattern, but the fabric, which he finds is too soft, and difficult to iron. As we talk about this, he starts telling me why he believes he likes 'firm' and 'stiff' materials, as he calls them:

**That's it, really. The feeling that my shirt really feels like it sits tight. So that when you wear something on top of it, it doesn't, you know (*acts as if he is fighting with a shirt and a pullover*), well actually, I haven't given this a thought, whatsoever ... I just sensed it.**

As opposed to these kinds of 'intuitive' sensations, as he calls them, it appears as though he has had a strict set of rules for what kinds of colours to wear. After wearing only black for many years, he purchased a silver jacket, 'which was still not too much like red, or green'. As he grew older and more confident, he started wearing more vivid and strong colours. He explains this by saying that as a teenager, he was very quiet and shy, whereas now, he often gives lectures or takes part in public debates, and then he likes to wear bright colours. He also says that this aesthetic of wearing black still appeals to him, and that

**If it isn't black, then it's got to be strong, significant colours. It has to be monochrome colours.**



Torben – with his raincoat in bright, monochrome orange.

### *Conclusions and revisions*

To summarise what I had encountered, it seems as though the subcultural style of Torben's youth is an *anchoring point*, both in terms of aesthetic preferences, and preferences that touch upon physical comfort. When he looks at the heaps of clothes before him, and when he takes one of these heaps up and looks at it, he is repeating taste patterns that hark back many years – to his late teenage years. He can see these years in

the heaps that he has sorted, as I ask him repeatedly about his likes and dislikes. Even if he has transformed a formerly gloomy-looking black-dressed teenager into an adult man wearing colourful shirts, what is visually present is that certain shapes and kinds of fabrics appeal to him, shapes and fabrics that he found in the punk style. No changes in his wardrobe have happened over night. Styles of dress have been slowly phased in or phased out in specific periods of his life, and in response to specific, exterior reasons like taking on a new job, choosing a partner, or having his daughter. One very important reason here is the fact that his body has changed from a slender, youthful body to a grown man's body. In relation to this, there are many objects in the wardrobe that he doesn't wear anymore, but continues to store in the hope that he might one day regain his former shape. Meanwhile, he has found a solution in the shirts and the winter coat with a 'moulded' shape that he can step into and thereby obtain an acceptable body shape that might not be slim, but, in any event, a kind of square-ish T-shape. This demands that the fabric be very 'stiff' and 'firm', and this seems to be a very important reason for why he prefers these qualities. As a scholar of fashion and dress, I was surprised at first about his hate towards fashion. But trying to see things from his point of view, I begin to understand him: fashion is all about change, and this is what he does *not* want. Instead, he wants to be able to find again what he really likes. This would enable him to repeat the taste patterns he has developed, which work well for him. Fashion stops him from doing that. On the other hand, he is not completely a stranger to changing fashions; this is something that came to light in the session we had about trousers. He has actually stopped wearing trousers that were fashionable ten years ago. However, he has not registered that he has changed his dressing behaviour because of changing fashions, but merely that he used to like these 'soft' trousers, and now he likes jeans. Actually, he never relates his clothes to fashion at all. With regard to his choice of shirts, they must not be too formal, which is why he never wears a tie, or 'night-shirt like' shirts. I was never sure exactly what he meant by this because he didn't have any, but my guess is that these were more like classical business shirts with stripes or checks. He very much appreciates 'practical' features in his wardrobe, but this definition turned out to be very diffuse: it covers both the functionality of an object such as the amount of pockets and the high quality of a fabric, his dress practice in general, and objects that he does not necessarily appreciate on the basis of aesthetics but more because they protect him from weather conditions like cold or rain. Lastly, the subcultural style of his youth seems to be in a category of itself, as if it was the starting point of the whole wardrobe, with later adjustments of the same thematics.

### *Method revision*

The fact that every single item in the wardrobe was picked out and displayed alongside similar objects caused him to reflect about his clothes in a way that made him surprised and made him see his wardrobe in a new light. He told me, several times, that he ordinarily tries to spend as little time as possible getting dressed or even thinking about clothing and appearance at all, but that now that we had been looking more closely at what he was storing, he could indeed spot certain similarities and differences that he had not seen before. While he might find it very difficult to describe his preferences verbally, he had many words for expressing why he disliked certain objects. Realising what was 'wrong' with the more passive objects helped him realise and express his preferences, because he could compare features like fabric, colour and shape as we were speaking. For instance, it had not dawned on him that most of his articles of passive clothing were simply of the wrong size.

I was somewhat focused on the wardrobe hierarchy. It worked well as a kick-starter for the conversation, but didn't reflect how he uses his wardrobe. For example, the clothes he never uses came in as the second 'most important' category. This could simply not serve to reflect his current dressing-related behaviour. Another problem was the timeline interview. Looking at Torben's wardrobe, I could tell how the transformation of a 'young' wardrobe into a more 'adult' one could be deciphered through the objects he was currently stored. In the wardrobe sessions, he could recognise patterns of preferences by seeing and touching the objects. He could realise and verbalise these patterns through expressing likes for certain textures or shapes, and dislikes for others.

In the timeline interview that we conducted in the kitchen, I could build my questions around what we had seen in the wardrobe. But the timeline became very instrumental and rationalised, and the connections between objects of an older and a newer date were lost. The wardrobe biography was told ad hoc, with one event and life phase following after the preceding term. It certainly told me quite a lot about Torben as a person, but did not tell me enough about his dressing-related practice. I therefore came to the conclusion that in the sessions with Jonas, the timeline perspective would have to be implemented during – and integrated right into – the wardrobe sessions, and would have to replace the wardrobe hierarchy. In this way, I could learn about patterns of taste and dress behaviour through the clothes in the wardrobe.



What I felt was missing was material on what took place in the daily routines and practices of Torben. He had told me a bit about what objects he could use for what situations, but this might have been rationalisations as well: in any event, I had no access to this information. Therefore, I turned to the cultural probes method, as a way of gaining insight into the daily lives of my informants. Again, I wanted the dress objects to be central in the sessions, and a way to accomplish that was to ask Jonas to create 'wardrobe diaries', and send me photos of his daily ensembles. This would have the advantage of preparing his mind-set before the sessions, since it would incite him to start reflecting more actively on his dress practice. It would also provide material about the day-to-day negotiations that take place at his workplace, which was a key interest of mine. With these revisions in mind, I contacted Jonas.

## **Jonas**

Jonas is 38 years old, and lives in a house in Copenhagen with his wife and two daughters. He works as the director of development in a large organisation. Before my first session with Jonas, we had had a very short meeting at his office, where I told him about the project and provided him with tasks for the probes. On each day during one work week, he was to send me a picture of what he was wearing. He was to take the pictures with his smartphone, and send them directly to my in-box. This way, it wouldn't be too time consuming for him. I had also provided him with a small notebook, where he was to comment on the various outfits before our scheduled meeting in his home. The five photos arrived in my inbox, and before going to his apartment, I printed out each photo on a piece of white cardboard. Along with me, I brought pens in various colours, so that he could write and draw on the printed images while he talked about them. After a run-through of the photos, I wanted him to grade them according to what he liked or disliked.

When I arrived, we had coffee, and then we ran quickly through all the dress objects he stores. Then we sat down and looked at the photos. The wardrobe that met me in the

bedroom of Jonas and his wife was, in some ways, similar to Torben's, but it was also very different. Again, a white wall-to-wall closet was shared, but because their bedroom was smaller than the one at Torben's house, the closet was smaller as well. The closet was divided in such a way that on each side of the door to the bedroom, there were cabinets. To the left of the door were two cabinets, with hangers in two sections. The upper section with hangers belongs to Jonas, and it is here that he stores his shirts and knitwear. The lower section belongs to his wife. The first thing that I noticed was how much clothing he was storing. I also noticed that there was a much broader variety in style and colour than what I saw in Torben's closet. The second thing I noticed was how orderly and neat everything had been hung and placed. The same thing sprang into my eyes when I took a look at the cabinets on the right side of the door, which he also shared with his wife. The left one was for his wife's long dresses and other longer objects such as long jackets, or a morning gown. In the two right cabinets there were hangers for trousers, which he shared with his wife: in the left side, she had skirts; in the right he had formal trousers. Below the hangers, they shared four drawers. The top drawer, which he called 'my detested drawer' was tightly packed with T-shirts, hoodies and a few knitwear items. In the next one, he was storing neatly folded jeans. When he opens the drawer below, where he keeps a variety of accessories like belts, ties, badges, cufflinks and handkerchiefs. This drawer, below the top two, is one that he shares with his wife. So he has accessories in the left side, while she has hers in the right side. All the belts were rolled up and tucked nicely in the small built-in boxes in the drawer, and the handkerchiefs had been folded neatly and placed according to colour.

All in all, Jonas has more storage space than his wife, and still he finds it hard to find enough place for what he wants - even if he explains that they store away their summer clothes in the winter, and vice versa. As did Torben, Jonas comments on the objects that are currently in the laundry bin, which amount, first and foremost, to a very impressive selection of socks - in a variety of colours. He tells me how his fondness for socks is connected with his fondness for combining and matching colours. What is most visible and easy to reach in his wardrobe are the shirts and the knitwear and the more formal trousers, the jeans and the accessories. What is kept in the bottom of the 'my detested drawer' is homewear like soft 'evening sweaters' or 'cozy wear', for when he gets home and wants to relax in the evening.

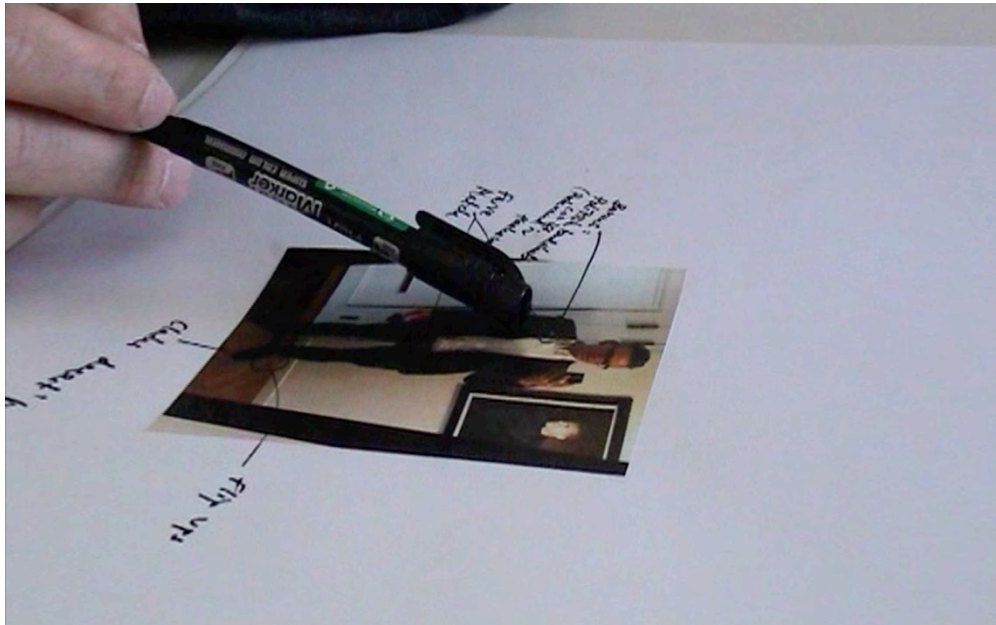
To sum this up, in the first session, Jonas started out by showing me a quick view of his wardrobe, before we started the probes interview. We looked at what he was storing in

his wardrobe closet. After that, we went down into the foyer, to look at his footwear. Then he showed me his grooming products on the bathroom, and finally he showed me his collection of glasses. In the second session, he started out with his oldest dress object, a Fred Perry polo shirt. He then moved to older 2Hand objects, recently purchased knitwear and hoodies, some old tailored shirts, recently purchased designer shirts and designer T-shirts, older rock merchandise T-shirts, accessories, older tailor-made suits, recently purchased made-to-measure suits, and a made-to-measure Harrington jacket.

### *'Soft business'*

As Jonas has already told me, he is, at the time of the session, going through a phase of change because he recently took on a new job. Before this change, he felt he could dress in a more relaxed and casual way, whereas now, he feels that he needs to 'shape up'. He talks about how to combine the 'two worlds' of business and creativity that he is engaged with in his new job as a consultant in a trade organisation in the creative branch. When we look at the photos that he has sent me before the interview, these concerns emerge as he speaks of the various ensembles he has put together for the various work days. After only a short while, it becomes clear to me that Jonas has a very different vocabulary for dress than that which Torben uses. Jonas is 'into details' very much indeed, and appears to enjoy spending time in the morning matching and combining what to wear. He tells me that his morning rituals for dressing take about 15-20 minutes. This is completely opposite from Torben, who tried to spend as little time as possible on this process - perhaps a few minutes. When Jonas speaks about what he wears, he pays attention to all sorts of details, and is aware of the name on the designer labels, and designer details like types of cut or trimmings. He describes his Monday ensemble (picture below) in the following way:

**A combination of the casual, jeans with flip-ups, and then, at the same time, this business-like upper body.**



Jonas' Monday ensemble. On the photo he is writing notes such as: 'flip ups', Clark desert boots', or 'colour match' while we are talking.

Here, he is wearing a white button-down shirt and grey jeans with flip-ups, a navy woollen blazer and black desert boots of the 'Clarks' brand. On the badge pinned to his blazer's lapel is a statement about the use of CO<sub>2</sub> in tap water versus bottled water. It is colourmatched with his belt. On this day, he worked at the office, and then had a meeting with politicians and NGOs. When I ask him to grade this ensemble on a scale from 1-10 he gave it an '8'. This is the top grade he gives, and only the Monday and Wednesday ensembles get this grade. He finds that he has got the balance just right in this ensemble, the balance between formal and casual, as he finds that he looks 'representable, but then I'm not the type who wears a tie'. He tells me that at his former workplace, he could occasionally wear a tie for certain types of meetings and events, but that it is not possible at his new job: that would be a 'no-go'. Another thing that is now a 'no-go' is to wear the same ensemble for more than one day at a time. He has to change every day. This is partly due to the fact that at his new work place, people are far more style conscious than they were at the former one, and this affects Jonas a lot:

**The issue looms up more in my consciousness, also in relation to colour matching, and whether or not it should be long or short trousers like, whether there should be flip-ups or not, and how far up they ought to be flipped, so that you can see a sock or ... these small details are more important now than what they used to be.**

Wednesday is very similar to Monday, aside from the fact that in the evening, he has to make a very important presentation. For this, he wears the same blazer as he did on Monday, a blue button-down shirt, tight fit grey jeans, black belt, black desert boots and his blue badge. As such, the ensemble is very similar to the Monday one. The adjustment

he has made since Monday lies particularly in the change of shirt, which he finds is more business-like than the white button-down shirt. Still, he emphasises that it is a designer shirt, of the Mads Nørgaard brand, and not a business shirt purchased from a menswear manufacturer. It has designer-details such as the type of buttons; there are straps on the sleeves, and the black and white stripes are slightly more dominant than they would be in a classic business shirt, he says. As we talk about this, we agree that what he is really looking for is what might be called a 'soft business' style.

### *Classics*

As we talk about the changes he is currently undergoing, Jonas has this to say:

**There's been a little extra focus on all this that's come about. And I just feel that's a natural thing, but I also believe that, well, my development will continue, but at a certain point I think it will stop. Because I am not dressing for all that is top modern, and for this type of fashion follower and, I think that really, I have my references more or less in place, that is, what kinds of styles that interest me, and on which I draw.**

This theme about how he draws on specific references as he dresses, and how these references have become even more important after changing his job, comes up several times during the sessions. For example, there is one point where we stand in his foyer, looking at all of his shoes – which he has taken out and placed on the floor. There are mostly desert boots or so-called 'Wallabees', of the 'Clarks' brand, and sneakers of the 'Converse' brand that are very similar in shape and material; these ankle boots all have rounded noses, and they are all made out of leather or suede. The colours are dark or simply black. He says that he likes shoes to be:

**Soft in the edges and not super distinct and expressive. I have an overall approach to trends that arrive and pass: I actually just like to stay with the classics.**



Jonas shows me a shoe of what he calls 'the Clark family'. All of his shoes are like these, almost identical in colour and shape and texture, even if they are not all of the very same brand.

As was the case with Torben's use of the term, 'practical', 'classics' cover a number of aspects related to Jonas' interaction with his wardrobe. First of all, it covers how he has started to re-connect with his past wardrobe, in order to find his own way through the current period of change. He tells me that when he was younger, he was much more focused on his appearance than he is now. He relates this to a specific period when he started to open his eyes to music and consequently wore specific brands and dress styles that were 'part of the uniform'. First of all, he used to wear a lot of 2Hand. Especially shirts, with short sleeves and a check pattern, in the same style as shirts of the 'Ben Sherman' brand. He still has some of these shirts, which are slightly square-ish in shape, with checks in various colours. Second, 'classics' seems to cover objects he has found that match the shape of his body, and that he can therefore return to again and again when he buys new articles of clothing. What was so good about finding these kinds of shirts in 2Hand shops was that because of the short sleeves, he didn't have to be concerned about size. Finding dress objects in 2Hand shops is very time consuming for Jonas, because he is very tall and thin, and he finds that this is 'particularly difficult because people were rather short earlier on'. Because of this, he has not been able to continue shopping 2Hand after he had children and started working, even though he would like to. There is simply too little time available. Another challenge he has due to his body shape is that he does not like the dress objects to be 'too straight'. This issue comes up several times: for example, when we look at the photo of his Thursday

ensemble. Here he wears a new pair of Clarks boots in leather, black jeans with flip-ups, a blue belt, black shirt, a blue cardigan with suede elbow lapels, and a military style jacket. On this day, he had a meeting with NGOs in London.



Jonas' ensemble for Thursday

He tells me that he likes this jacket because of its shape, which he describes as 'fluffy', and 'it doesn't just fall like, right off, like that. After saying this, he gestures with his hands in an up-and-down movement, and whistles, to show me a straight and narrow shape. He says how he prefers this kind of jacket to, for example, trench coats or 'English overcoats' that are 'too straight'. He then repeats the whistle and the gesture, and says how he feels 'straight enough as it is'. Another feature of this ensemble that is related to his body shape is the flip-ups on his trousers legs. He makes these because often, he cannot find trousers where the legs are sufficiently long, and because of this, he has made a virtue out of necessity. He now stores a wide variety of socks in various colours, that he colour matches with the remaining ensemble, because the socks can be seen between the flipped-up trousers and the boots. Based on principles like this, he has developed certain kinds of 'classics' in his wardrobe, which work for him because they fit his body shape.



The most beloved dress object he owns is the blazer from the Monday and Wednesday ensembles, and this is because of the fit. It fits his body perfectly, and he believes that this is due to the fact that it is 2Hand. He would never have the money to buy a brand new blazer in the same quality as this one: the high quality of the material and the padding make it far better fit than any of the other blazers he owns. When he is expected to perform 'extra' at the job, he wears this blazer because:

**I think it's partly made out of wool, it's like strong, plus there's the fact that the padding inside, well, there's just done something magical about it. When I wear this blazer then you always feel well, and it's like, magic. It's the shit, right? It just fits me well. It fits so nicely, it follows the body, and this happen no matter whether it is opened or closed. It's just my favourite blazer.**



Jonas' Wednesday ensemble, where he wears his 'lucky jacket': a 2Hand blazer purchased many years ago.

As we talk our way through his entire wardrobe, the concept of 'classics' turns out to be tightly connected with something that fits well. Jonas owns several tailor-made, or made-to-measure, objects. The oldest ones are two suits and two shirts made by a tailor in Shanghai, that he had made on a trip a few years ago. Now he finds the cut to be out of fashion. But these have been some of his favourite objects in his wardrobe for a long period of time. Now, he is considering having them redone by a tailor, so as to be able to wear them again. Recently, he purchased, in London, two similar made-to-measure suits of the 'Andy Sherman' brand, and a Harrington jacket that can be re-ordered in another fabric of his own pick. What he likes about these objects is the fact that once he has



finally found something that matches his body shape, he can go back and order new articles. Unlike Torben, Jonas seems to have found a solution to the problem of wearing out his favourite things because in this way, he can obtain the same ones again.

### *Mod style*

When we look at some of the older dress objects in Jonas' wardrobe, I start to understand what he means when he speaks about certain 'references' that he draws on in his dress style. And I start to understand what he means when he says that Ben Sherman shirts were 'part of the uniform'. When Jonas was in his mid-teens, he went through a short period where he was attracted to grunge music, and to the whole dress style related to this. But in his late teenage years, he turned to Brit pop. He was hanging out at a bar in Copenhagen called 'Klaptræet' [Clapperboard], which hosted a weekly event called 'pop-stage'. Here, he and other Brit pop fans would gather and listen to music. Jonas would look at the Brit pop musicians in magazines like *The Face*, *NME* and *HUE Magazine* or other British music magazines, read about the music, and check out the musicians' style. He would also find inspiration in the dress style of his friends, or guys on the street or at concerts. We talk about this when we look at a blue polo shirt of the 'Fred Perry' brand, about which he says:

**At that time, there were just a few who wore Fred Perry, so you could really stand out with such a bold one as this here. It was the Brit-pop era, right, and this shirt really expresses that period very well.**



The oldest dress object in Jonas' wardrobe is this Fred Perry polo shirt, which represents how he got introduced to Brit pop - and thereby to the Mod style.

To me, the Brit pop style is related to things like football T-shirts, baggy pants, trainers, 1960s hairdos, and British bands like *Blur* and *Oasis*. And sure enough, from Jonas' 'detested drawer', he pulls out several rock merchandise T-shirts from this period. He used to wear them a lot. Now he finds them to be inappropriate for wearing at his workplace, and they have been downgraded to homewear or sportswear. Instead, he is trying to find T-shirts with simple, graphic prints that are more stylish, so that he can still wear T-shirts at work. However, not all of the dress objects and styles that I find to be typical of the Brit-pop era are to be found in his wardrobe. For example, he has never owned a pair of baggy pants. Instead, he used to wear shrink-to-fit jeans. Jonas says:

**I think that this is related to my build, right? That's a thin hip-hop style, and I don't really know if it fits together.**

Altogether, it seems that it is not really the Brit-pop style that Jonas is talking about when he speaks about 'references' for his dress style. It is the Mod style, the one that derives from London in the early 1960s. Jonas speaks about it this way:

**I think that I have been really lucky that the Brit-pop style has some references to the Mod style, which is very classical, which is easy to return to and cultivate even more as you get older and perhaps like the more classical. Whereas, I don't know, say Goth or Grunge, for that matter, right? That's a bit more difficult to bring along with you. And this is very much about the fact that the music, the music in itself, still means a lot to me. And this ... how can I say this? This reference and this history, I would like to carry these with me so that the heart is still in it, and like, the feelings for this past, which are still there: they still follows me. I really think that means a lot to me. And there, it's quite easy in my little head, because it is quite a limited frame reference right? And then, like, when I see something ... I ... and then I start to think, hey, this fits right into my past or this Mod way of thinking - which I must emphasize I don't cultivate as some others do - it's just a small red thread**

**somewhere. And I can easily spot that if there are others who cultivate it a lot or that just dress after the same references, this would fit right in.**

As we move from his Fred Perry polo shirt and over towards newer dress objects in his wardrobe, he points out – several times – how this or that style, or object, refers to the Mod style. This goes for his button-down shirts, his many desert boots, his Harrington jacket, and the flip-ups he makes on his jeans. And then, there are his hairdo and his glasses. They are quite distinct in style, with a heavy black plastic frame, reminding one, to a great extent, of the style deriving from Britain in the 1960s. As we talk about them, he takes out the first pair of glasses he had, which he purchased in the 1990s. They are of the Swedish 'Bernadotte' brand, and were purchased from a surplus stock in the centre of Copenhagen. He had some glasses in another style for a period of time, but then he decided to go back to his old style again. He purchased the new glasses when he started to wear his current hairdo, which he calls 'Morrissey hair'. He was going to a concert with the singer, Morrissey, in Berlin, needed a haircut, and decided to have the same hairdo as the singer. This requires of Jonas that he shower his hair every morning, and blow-dry it into shape with wax. It is all these rituals and particular dress objects that guide Jonas through what he calls a 'red thread', through the transition he is facing, due to his recent change of job.

### *Colour matching*

Even though Jonas tells me that his wife wants him to be more fashionable, it's as if he has a space of his own in his wardrobe, where he can play with colours and details that are not particularly connected to any particular style or period. We have a long talk about his drawer with accessories, where we go through all the colour variations he can mix and match. For example, we look at a handkerchief in different shades of green, which can be folded so that only one colour is visible. Jonas says:

**You can cheat a bit, you know, and choose the shade you want and that's damn clever, don't you think?**



Jonas' accessories drawer. Notice how everything is neatly folded and stored, and placed in colours, so that he can easily access the articles during his morning ritual of getting dressed.

As we go through his wardrobe, and when we have our talk about his photos, a pure joy for combining colours and details runs through both sessions, which does not seem to be connected to any particular style. He likes all kinds of colours, even if his colour palette can be said to be slightly more delicate than Torben's, with pastel colours such as light yellow. When he talks about this aspect of his dress practice, it seems that it is not related so much to notions of appropriateness, style, or other more practical aspects. It seems that playing with colours is just a basic approach he takes to his dress practice, an approach that he could have implemented in all sorts of styles.

### *Conclusions, hypotheses and perspectives for further study*

What really surprised me was how his interaction with his wardrobe was, in so many ways, very similar to Torben's, even though the two men are so very different. Like Torben, he is 'conservative' in the sense that he sticks to the same styles and preferences, even if he calls them 'classics'. He is also very pleased when he can find again what he already likes. Like Torben, he has had to let go of some preferences, such as his penchant for 2Hand clothes, because he has less time to himself now than he did in his student years. Like Torben, he draws on a set of preferences that are connected with the music he listened to as a teenager, with which he still identifies. He has not

selected just any objects from this subcultural style, but ones that match his build, with fabric qualities that makes him feel 'at home', as he articulates it. And also like Torben, he doesn't have words for fabric qualities or qualities that concern aspects of comfort, but he knows what he likes and dislikes, and selects the same qualities again and again. What strikes me in my interviews with Jonas is that the qualities and colours he prefers resemble how he is as a person: his soft and pleasant voice and behaviour are reflected in the softness of the suede and the soft knitwear, and in the thin light fabrics of the Harrington jacket. Both Torben and Jonas are able to describe the full 'uniform' of their subcultural styles very vividly, and also in terms of details, like 'ghost ensembles of the past'. Even if these objects and styles are no longer existent, they continue to affect the two men' daily selection. In relation to the concept of 'favourites', I was touched by the way both men mourned the loss of worn out objects, and by the way they treasured loved objects. It was almost like these objects were *clothes companions*: old friends who had been with them at important phases and events in their lives. Moreover, I was intrigued by the talismanic character of objects like Jonas' 'lucky jacket', the blazer that he used for events where he had to perform extra impressively.

Of course, there are most definitely also differences between the two men. Whereas Torben seems to have one strategy for dressing that sort of solves all dilemmas, Jonas is more strategic, and adjusts his appearance to various events and settings. He likes spending time on his appearance, reflects a lot on colour matching, and enjoys shopping to some considerable degree. Whereas Torben hardly knows what materials or styles are called, Jonas is familiar with detailed names for cuts, and is very much into brands. Still, both men are very conscious about their respective styles.

## **Conclusion and perspectives**

I started out framing an approach to the wardrobe method that was based on the processual view of Shove et al. (2008) on the relationship between 'having' and 'doing', combined with the view of Entwistle (2000) that dressing is a 'bodily situated practice'. I

also followed the idea of Hansen (2000/2003) that people make use of 'clothing competences' in their dress practice, in order to dress and act appropriately. Based on these considerations, I formed the theoretical models of *sensory anchoring* and *sartorial systems*. In my fieldwork, I studied informants who were seen to have particular 'dressing dilemmas', as described by Tarlo (1996): namely, adult men working as so-called 'free agents' in the creative industry. As an overall aim, I was searching for ways that my informants 'solved' their daily dressing dilemmas, and for how their 'solutions' were connected with sensory as well as time-related aspects of dressing. In order to engage this particular view in my approach to the wardrobe method, I combined so-called 'innovative' methods from design research with micro-ethnographic methods.

### *Method revision*

In terms of method design, I found the combination of mobile probes and wardrobe sessions to be the procedural strategies that would best connect with my research objectives. My attempts at regulating the interview structure in relation to time or hierarchy proved to be too vaguely communicated, or simply too rigid to be implementable in a semi-structured interview like the ones I made. Such regulations seem to be more appropriate to other kinds of studies that are closer to the design:lab idea of Binder et al., like the workshops that are conducted by Bang with textile designers. Because I find my study positioned in between 'applied' and 'innovative' methods, I found it necessary to stick with the associative, fluent process of a dialogue, which does not correlate well with too much interference. On the other hand, I found that both the idea of the 'wardrobe biography' and the technique of 'clustering' worked well with this interview structure, since they served to conjoin issues like style, bodily experience, and time aspects, to the dress objects in the wardrobe.

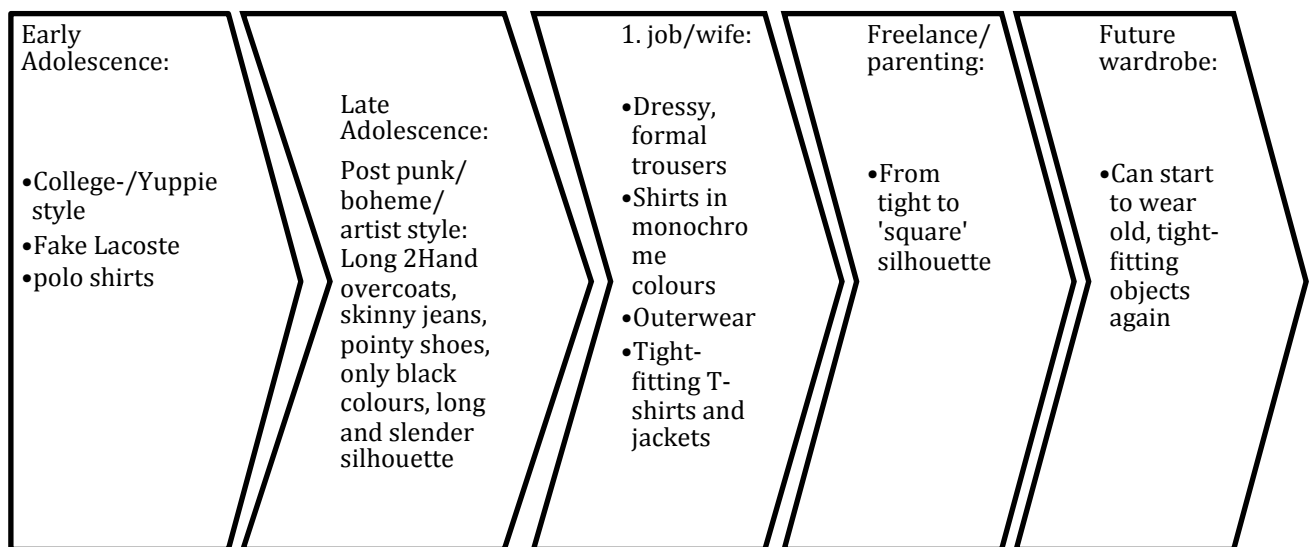
In terms of sample, I could also have chosen to find a grouping that is far more 'ordinary' than the 'free agents' I decided on. In all likelihood, Torben and Jonas are far more style conscious than lots of other adult men. However, I see this as an advantage, because this paved the way for a widening and an extrapolation of the general idea that dress practice is either connected to concepts like 'fashion', 'anti-fashion', and 'the unfashionable', or to exotic dress practices of non-Western cultures. These two men are engaged, to a greater or lesser degree, with fashion, but it seemed that it was only one

sartorial system among others. They seemed to build their ideas of style on highly personal issues such as body shape and aesthetic preferences about fabric qualities and colours, as well as on larger cultural scripts which, in much the way that was described by Tharp, are present as immanent layers of 'muscle memory', as well as the memory of 'codes' related to particular objects or combinations.

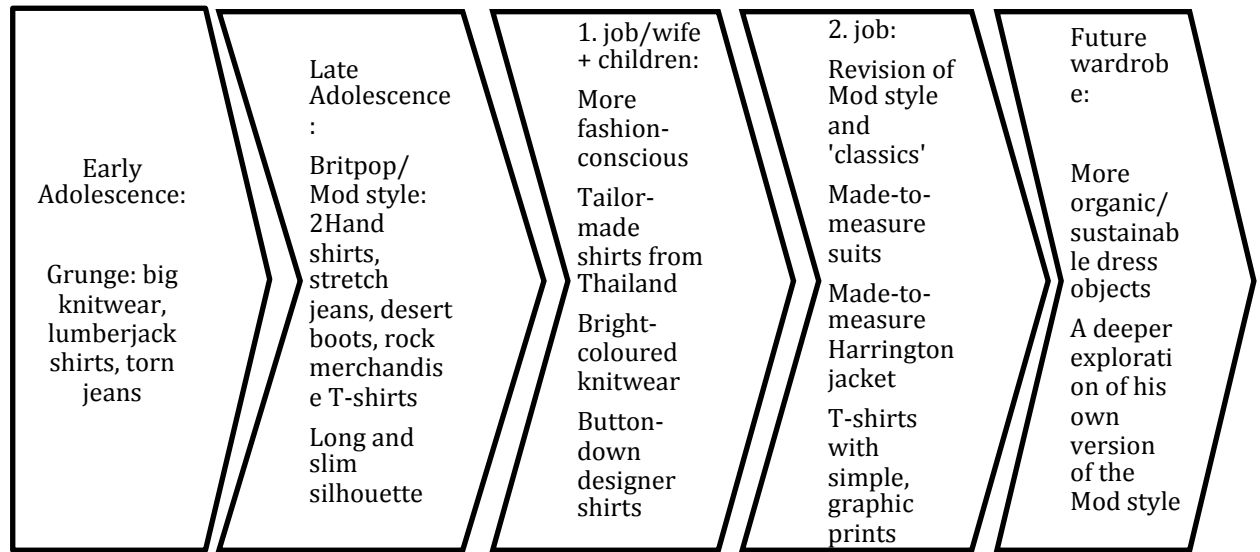
*Field work reflections*

As seen in a diachronic perspective, what I have experienced in both Torben's and Jonas' wardrobes is that they both are very connected to their past wardrobes. They have both been testing out and trying various identities throughout their adolescent years, and eventually came up with dress styles in which they 'felt right'. Throughout their adult lives, these styles have been adjusted and developed, but there are still shapes, textures, and colour preferences that they carry with them: for example, that way that Jonas prefers a rounded shape in his footwear, the matt and soft expression of suede, and certain types of knit - and the matt, lightweight materials of, for instance, the Harrington jacket. In Torben's case, he continues to pursue certain types of colours and certain silhouettes that refer back to the post-punk style that he wore when he was young, and moreover, he likes the fabrics to be rather thick and stiff. Below, I have tried to plug the various examples of styles and dress objects into my model of 'sensory anchoring':

**SENSORY ANCHORING, TORBEN**



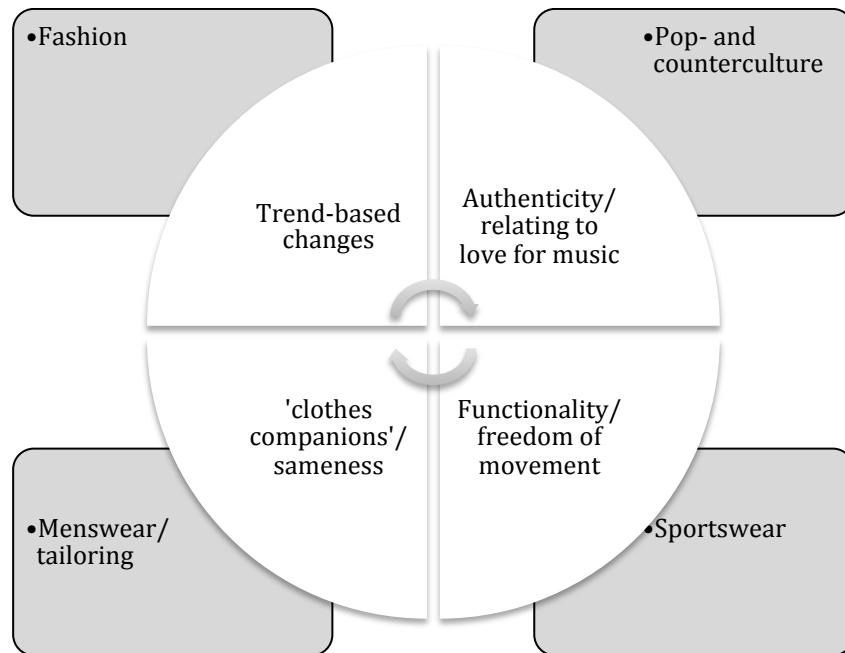
## SENSORY ANCHORING, JONAS



In order to understand these mechanisms in a synchronic perspective as well, I have been very interested in the way the two men think of their wardrobes as 'conservative' or 'classic', and all together about the way they speak about the kinds of styles they wear. As we looked at the dress objects they had and discussed what they liked, it was quite clear that their preferences were highly individual and personal versions of, for example, the 'classic' Mod style. This was manifest in the way that Jonas made use of his 2Hand suit jacket or his 'soft business' shirts for more formal meetings, and in the way that Torben had certain shirts for public events or teaching, and others for working at home. First, it is clear to me that they are navigating through the principles of various sartorial systems rather than on the principles of fashion only. Secondly, it is clear that they both make individual versions of a given combination of dress styles, or, as Swidler sees it, re-enact and appropriate various cultural 'repertoires' in individual ways through bricolage. As I see it, both men are engaged with shared cultural ideas about being young, or being adult, that derive from the sartorial system of pop- and counter-culture, and of menswear/tailoring. Based on these available repertoires in their respective settings, they each negotiate a personal version that configures their dress styles, which they have developed and adjusted over time (see model on next page).



## SARTORIAL SYSTEMS MODEL, TORBEN AND JONAS



Fashion	<i>codes:</i> Jonas' taste for shopping and his attention to brands; the fact that Torben doesn't use his dressy, formal trousers anymore, but now wears black jeans <i>skills, practices:</i> How their silhouette doesn't stick out completely from the trend.
Pop- and counterculture	<i>codes:</i> Jonas' Mod style references such as the button-down shirt, flip-ups, desert boots, the Harrington jacket. Torben's references to punk, such as the colour black. <i>skill, practices:</i> Their way of perceiving these styles as something authentic or 'close to the heart', and as indicators of shared taste group preferences that derive from musical genres.
Menswear/ tailoring	<i>codes:</i> Their shirts, blazers, and Jonas' suits. <i>skills, practices:</i> The way they both like dress objects that are 'made for them' and have a good 'fit'. The way they would like to buy the same over and over again, if they could.
Sportswear	<i>codes:</i> Torben's outerwear, such as his rain coat. Jonas' soft hoodies and home wear. <i>skills and practices:</i> Torben's concept of 'practical'.

### Next steps

What I could conclude on the basis of this way of understanding the situation is that there seems to be a discrepancy between the logics and understandings of 'fashion' as a cultural repertoire, and the way in which my informants actually interacted with their wardrobes. In the light of my sartorial systems model, I saw before me two men for

whom 'fashion' was quite inferior to their own dress practices. Actually, both men were markedly disinterested in fashion, although they were both very conscious about their dress style. What seemed to matter much more to them was the 'sensory anchoring': sensations, aesthetics, and memories connected with ideas of self that had been developed over a time period extending more than twenty years. As such, these men seemed to be much more interested in virtues and skills relating to the repertoire of 'menswear/tailoring' or 'pop-/subculture', which address aspects such as continuity and authenticity. Rather than being interested in what was new, they seemed to be much more occupied with 'the old' – in what they stored already, in what they have already found works out well for them, in what kinds of shapes, colours, textures, etc. they had found 'felt right' throughout their adulthood.

Insofar as I wished to challenge further the way dress practice is widely connected with the cultural repertoire of 'fashion', I could find no better place to explore than the fashion industry itself. I saw this as a relevant move, for more reasons. Firstly the agencies and gatekeepers in the industry are involved in the seasonal collections that are being produced, distributed, disseminated, and sold as something new and desirable. In this way, they reproduce inherent skills, codes and practices for fashion, and help sustain the system. What I was yearning for was to establish a research framework based on my wardrobe sessions that might operationalise my theoretical models further. In relation to this aspiration, I became absorbed with questions about the so-called 'after life' of dress objects: what happens to them once they have been sold, and once they commence their life cycle as part of peoples wardrobes. I then developed the idea that by following dress objects from brand to wardrobe, I might be able to shed some light on how these objects become inscribed with new meanings through the process of use. This correlated well with my interest in people's 'clothing competences', as described by Hansen: the way dress objects from the West are transformed through use so that they match ideas of appropriateness in Zambia. In much the same way, dress objects from a given brand are transformed when they enter people's wardrobes, so that they match people's ideas of self. It is this transition process that stands as the objective for the following chapter. As such, both theoretical models for enquiry are at play: First, how individual dress objects will undergo a transition process from being 'fashion' objects to eventually being part of peoples wardrobes. And second, how these objects, promoted by a given brand as 'new', are then appropriated into 'old' taste patterns that are developed by individual persons.







**PART 2**

**THE NØRGAARD PROJECT**

## Introduction

There were many brands that I could have chosen to collaborate with. First of all, I needed to decide what sector in the fashion industry I wanted to address: it could be a major high street brand, or a medium-size or smaller design-led brand. Each sector has its own practices in relation to fashion, and I was looking for something that could match my idea of 'favourites'. I therefore realised that the high street sector might not be appropriate for this project. Working with this sector, I would soon be able to conclude that 2-week production cycles do not match the cycles of the wardrobe, and this would surely lead me into discussions about sustainability, or as Black describes it: Fashion's 'paradox'; discussions centred on how the rapid speed of such production cycles are out of tact with people's dress practice, how there are immense problems in relation to such overproduction and overconsumption, and how practices in the high street sector need to be altered completely in order to establish a more balanced relation between consumption and production. (Black in: Black (ed.) 2013:8). Black mentions this with regard to matters of sustainability. This could have been an obvious issue to engage with, since Klepp actually relates her own concept of 'favourites' to sustainability issues (Klepp in: Skov (ed.) 2010:170). However, I chose to engage fully with such discussions elsewhere. What I found much more interesting in relation to my research objectives in this project was to work with medium-size design-led companies. In such companies, particular attention is paid to developing signature features that are seen as characteristic. In order to secure a position in the market, such brands need to distinguish themselves from others through particular approaches to colour palette, kinds of fabrics, or shapes and trimmings in their design, so as to be recognisable. Furthermore, they need to reflect these characteristic features in the way they promote, distribute, and sell their design. It is in this way that I see such brands as engaging with the concept of 'favourites': how they have to develop significant design features, which are repeated, with variations and adjustments, over and over again. Just like favourites in the wardrobe, such features derive from a point of departure where decisions have been made about preferences and dislikes, and about what 'felt right'. Most often, these decisions are based on the hunches and capacities of a single designer. In this sense, the 'favourites' of such brands reflect the personal 'favourites' of a given designer. Accordingly, I found it as much more relevant to work with such company, mobilising

my interest in transition processes and in the displacement of values from the production of 'fashion' to consumers. There would simply be a closer correlation between brand practices and user practices, which I found would be very interesting to explore.

In my quest to find a brand that was as closely comparable with my sample as possible, I was on the lookout for one that would reflect the 'sartorial systems' I had spotted in the wardrobes of my informants. This meant that it had to be a brand that was engaged with characteristic features deriving from all four systems. There might have been a couple I could think of. There are more Danish menswear designer brands that are renown for combining more sartorial systems, such as WoodWood, which specialises in the mix of hip-hop, outerwear and fashion, and Soulland, which can be characterised by their mix of hip-hop and classical menswear features. However, I was looking to find a brand that reflected the dilemma between a 'young' dress style, and a 'adult' one that matched my sample and the brands mentioned above were, in my mind, a bit too preoccupied with the 'young'. On the other hand, there are other Danish designer brands that are more 'adult', but still engage with fashion, such as Bruuns Bazaar, Day Birger et Mikkelsen, or Sand. However, I found that such brands would be not engaging sufficiently with sportswear and pop-/counterculture, so they would not match my project.

Prompted by these reflections, I conducted a small series of wardrobe sessions in the homes of three informants, in collaboration with Danish fashion designer Mads Nørgaard. This took place in the period from autumn 2011 until spring 2012. From the outset, the project was very open, and was based simply on the idea that I wanted to know what happens with dress objects after people buy them. As far as I know of, this issue has not been the object of much interest in the fashion industry in general, and I knew for a fact that Mads Nørgaard had very little knowledge of the so-called 'after life' of his designs. As the project evolved and as I started transcribing, coding and analysing the material, I found more and more how the difference between production and consumption practices could be understood through aspects of temporality. As such, I have sketched out in the introductory chapter how the wardrobe method can be seen as part of this discussion. My fieldwork represents a mapping out of the respective informants and their wardrobes, and a 'follow-the-object' study where each informant is provided with dress objects from Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen. Finally in the conclusive chapter, I put forth my reflections on how such a study might illuminate new perspectives on the Nørgaard brand in particular, and on the fashion industry in general.



## Why Mads Nørgaard?

In the following, I will highlight why I ended up asking Mads Nørgaard to collaborate, and will explain how he engages with all four sartorial systems in his signature style.

When I write 'the Nørgaard brand' I am referring not only to the specific brand 'Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen', but also to everything that goes on and is produced in the house positioned on the address, Amager Torv 13-15, in the heart of the city of Copenhagen, all of which relates to the history of the brand. In 1936, Mathias Nørgaard took over 'Sørgemagasinet' ['The Mourning Magazine'], a retail shop and tailoring studio for clothing and fabric for mourning clothes, which can itself be traced back to 1863. In 1944, Mathias Nørgaard moved the shop to Amager Torv no. 13, where the Nørgaard house is placed today. After Mathias' death in 1945, the shop was run by a manager until 1956, when his son, Jørgen (born 1930), took over and changed the shop completely. It was re-named 'Nørgaard på Strøget' ['Nørgaard on the Pedestrian Mall'] and has been said to be the very first shop for teenagers in Copenhagen. In 1986, Jørgen's son Mads (born 1962), got involved in the business. He opened his own menswear shop right next to the original shop, on Amager Square no. 15, and started designing his own styles. In the period 1986-89, Mads and Jørgen had a 2Hand shop around the corner that was called 'Under Jordan' ['Under Ground'] Since 1995, Mads has been in charge of designing collection lines for women, men and children under the name 'Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen'. Today, the Nørgaard house consists of four shops that are interlinked; children's-, men's-, and women's-wear shops run by Mads, and the original Nørgaard shop which is still supervised by Mads' father, Jørgen. I regard each of these four shops as representing various aspects of the Nørgaard brand that correlate with the sartorial systems I encountered in the wardrobes of Jonas and Torben. Realizing how both Jonas and Torben were quite disinterested in the change of fashion as a point of orientation, I had been looking for a brand that could embrace repetition as well as novelty, 'new friends' as well as 'clothes companions'. This seems to be the key combination for understanding the Nørgaard brand, as the following has been articulated by the former head of Designmuseum Denmark, Bodil Busk Laursen:

*"Stability and Fashion might seem to be clear opposites, but none the less this is the secret behind the shop, Nørgaard på Strøget..."* (Laursen (ed.) (2008:7)

The Nørgaard house on Amagertorv 13-15 employs approximately 40 full-time workers who are occupied in the shops on the ground floor, and the offices, the show room and the design studio on the 2nd and 3rd floors. In this way it is very typical of the Danish fashion industry, which is dominated by middle-sized design-led companies that Tran defines as *branded fashion companies*: 'manufactures without factories' and their own retail stores, possibly with a flagship store (Tran 2008:26). I apprehend the Nørgaard brand through Verganti's idea of a design company run by a charismatic leader, who uses a network people by members of the cultural elite to develop new ideas and concepts, and thereby contributes with new meaning to a product. This new meaning might involve technological or aesthetic adjustments, which Verganti sees as 'design driven innovations': newly-added elements to the design that provide consumers with experiences that feel 'new' or significant. All of this jibes very neatly with the Nørgaard brand. In the house are two charismatic leaders at play, Jørgen and Mads Nørgaard, who seem to glue all the elements of their brand together with their own personal taste and opinions about design. They have both most actively been using networks with the Danish cultural elite in actual collaborative projects, but are also active in a 'design discourse', through which they develop and understand what they do. I do not necessarily mean to say, here and now, that the Nørgaard brand has contributed with actual design-driven innovations that comply with Verganti's notion of the concept, but rather that what they have done is to demonstrate an ability to implement a particular 'Nørgaard meaning' in everything they do, including what they design, how they appear in public, and how they manage their business. As such, I see this 'Nørgaard meaning' as constitutive of the approach to 'favourites' of the brand. In the following, I will elaborate on how I see this as being related to my sartorial systems model.

First of all, I see the sartorial system of menswear and tailoring as deriving from the historic development of the brand. The Nørgaard family has know-how and experience of trading textiles and clothes that go back many decades, and there is a consciousness about the use of high quality materials that I see as deriving from 'Sørgemagasinet', which had a tailoring studio on the second floor, and sold fabrics by the metre and offered retail sales on the ground floor. Today, there is always a formal, dressy suit that appears as part of the brand's collections, and it is possible to have adjustments made (i.e., to shorten the trousers' legs, etc.) at the design studio. I am thereby in no way

claiming that the Nørgaard brand is just like a menswear tailor studio, but at least it is engaged with the ideals and practices stemming from there. However, some of the virtues deriving from this system are unfolded in the way that the Nørgaard brand regards itself as connected with modernism, and modernist values of 'good design'. In relation to the sartorial system of menswear, I am thinking particularly about the way tailored menswear is supposed to last long, to not be spectacular, and to have elegance in the details. Here, the Nørgaard brand has refined signature styles that are produced again and again, with very little variation. To mention the two most important ones, there is the 'Rip 101', designed by Jørgen Nørgaard in 1967, and the sailor sweater designed by Mads Nørgaard in the end 1990's. Both are very simple in style, and not spectacular; they are, in fact, basic designs that vary only on colour, and never in shape or fabric. It is here that I see a link to my own findings: what both Torben and Jonas mention is how they get frustrated once they find something they really like, if they cannot find it again. A brand such as Nørgaard embraces such practices and demands, and in this way not only reproduces the *codes* of the sartorial system of menswear, but also the *practices* connected with it.

Second, the brand is related to the sartorial system of pop- and sub-culture because of its early appropriation of pop- and teenage culture. This is related very much to Jørgen Nørgaard's original approach. Jørgen Nørgaard managed very successfully to embrace, right in his shop, the mixture of 'good' and 'bad' taste that evolved in the 1960's pop-art and postmodernism. This approach has been continued by Mads Nørgaard, so that there is a straight line running from Jørgen's collaborations with, for example, the Danish performance artist Kirsten Delholm to Mads' collaborations with the Danish-Norwegian art duo, Elmgreen and Dragseth, and the Danish artist, FOS. The same approach signifies the product range of their shops, which represent a combination of highly esteemed designers known for their quality products, and cheap accessories or stuff from joke shops. Mads Nørgaard has developed and refined the combination of 'good' and 'bad' taste very literally in his design styles, often through very simple details like the colour of a zipper, or a stripe of colour on, for example, the rib cuff of his knitwear. The colours used for these details are mostly bright, even neon-ish, orange, bright pink, and bright green. In this way, the design in itself, and the approaches and ideas behind it, display a close relation to pop-culture in the brand.

Moreover, there is a strong affection for the sartorial system of pop- and counter-culture in the brand. In Mads Nørgaard's men's wear shop, there is a 'wall of fame', with photos

of rock stars that date back from the early 1960s and up until today. Mads Nørgaard has underlined his fascination with counterculture and rock music at other occasions, such as in the 'Christiania trilogy', presented in 2005-7, where he had fashion shows in the alternative community of Christiania, such as his use, every now and then, of rock stars as catwalk models, and such as his references to Copenhagen's underground scene in the fashion movies, 'Copenhagen Experience 1+2' from 2007-8. Relating this to Nørgaard's own menswear design, I regard this as being very connected to the dress styles of Western, 'white' rock, that dates back to the Dandies of the 1830s, the Edwardians of the 1890s, the Teddy boys of the 1950s, the punks of the 1970s, and the neo-dandies of the 2000s; In Mads Nørgaard's interpretation of this, in his design, the silhouette is slim, almost constricting the body, and there is a stringency and simplicity in the design. The colours can be both very bright or very toned down, but they are mostly monochrome. There are rarely ornaments or colourful prints, and if so, they are kept very simple. I would be very surprised to see Nørgaard taking up the expression and silhouette of hip-hop, or other non-Western originated styles. A white rock style seems to be more adaptable to the modernistic approach of the brand, and to Mads Nørgaard's own personal taste. However, this stringency in the design always has a 'soft' (Nordic?) quality to it, as can be seen, for example, in this silhouette from the AW14 collection (see below).



Picture from Mads Nørgaard's AW14 collection, 'The Stripes are out Tonight', during the Danish fashion week 2014; here, many key features of Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen's menswear design are present: references that hark back to the 1970s counter-culture movement, with the sweater, which also imparts a 'soft' and Nordic touch to the rock silhouette. The model, it can be noted, has a rebel attitude with his earring and his Beatle haircut, and in the background, the Danish underground girl band, 'Baby in Vain', plays live. ©Copenhagen Fashion Week

As has also been argued by Riegels Melchior (2013), counter-culture with a 'soft', democratic or Nordic approach, typical of the Danish hippie movement, is visible in the 'Rip 101' long-sleeved T-shirt, and the sailor turtleneck sweater. Both objects share ideals, materials and shapes that can be said to be typical of the late 1960s and the early 1970's, which I regard as having an exceptionally important influence on the design approach of the Nørgaard brand. Jørgen Nørgaard designed his 'Rip 101' under the influence of the period's unisex fashions, which stemmed from ideas about gender equality and women's rights movements that were, at that time, making such a huge impact in Denmark. The T-shirt was designed to take shape after all body types, and it was supposed to be worn without a bra, in order to celebrate the young women of the Danish women's lib movement. There is an innocence about the design that draws a parallel with the development of Danish children's literature- and television of this period, which was, incidentally, heavily criticized by right-wing politicians for being 'red' propaganda. I have found two examples that cast light on the connection between dress styles, counterculture, the liberation of children and women, and how 'Rip 101' was promoted. First, an illustration from the Danish children's book, 'Totte and Malene', a book in the 'Totte'-series by Camilla Wolde. In this book, Totte and Malene realise that while they appear as being completely alike, they are not alike when they take off their clothes to play, and see each other's naked bodies. The text on the illustration reads: *"But just as he feels most lonely, he meets Malene. Malene's T-shirt and trousers are just like his"* (Wolde 1974:2). The same could be said to apply to the couple that is depicted in 'Rip 101' T-shirts in the Danish weekly newspaper, *Søndags-B.T.*



Left: an illustration from 'Totte and Malene', by Camilla Wolde. Right: photo from the scrapbook of 'Nørgaard på Strøget', reproduced in Rasmussen (ed.) (2006:53). Even though the T-shirt was originally designed for women, here it is worn in a unisex style - in a typical Danish 1970s middleclass/hippie setting, with a acid-washed pine tree table, Danish tableware made of stoneware, with a brown glaze, and a shared box of matches and cigarettes lying on the table, thus reproducing the ideals of gender equality so prevalent in the period.

Altogether, there is a very strong connection between the way Torben and Jonas are attached to ideas of authenticity and membership in pop-and counter-culture, and the way that the Nørgaard brand interacts with this sartorial system. The inherent, ritualised practices of membership and distance to mainstream culture and commercialism are deeply embedded in both the practices of the company, and the practices of the informants.

However, when it comes to the sartorial system of fashion, there is a gap between the two practices. While Torben and Jonas distances themselves to fashion, Mads Nørgaard is part of the system itself. As a way of solving this discrepancy, he has tried to create an overall understanding of the brand, in which fashion plays a very central role; this is because overall business logics and the 'gloss' of the design cover up the fact there are other sartorial systems at play, which play an important role in the way he perceives and produces his idea of 'favourites'.

In the above, I have addressed how the brand values of Nørgaard relate to my sample, and to my research objectives. However, I would like to elaborate more deeply on the concept of 'favourites', in order to strengthen my explanatory framework. This is due to the fact that I perceive 'favourites' as epitomising people's personal dress styles, which are driven forward by the way they negotiate between various 'sartorial systems'. Inherent in the 'fast' virtues of fashion, the long-lasting membership virtues of pop-and counter-culture, and the even more stabile virtues of menswear/tailoring, there are issues of temporality at play, which can be negotiated by the individuals in their wardrobes. Still, these issues have been placed in the margins of fashion and dress research. Because of what I have encountered in my research on wardrobes, I believe that it is time to place these issues more centrally, in order to obtain a more faceted and reflected understanding of dress practice. I have therefore turned to design research, particularly in relation to issues of sustainability, because it is largely here that a processual view in relation to design is unfolded and elaborated - a view that correlates with my concept of 'sensory anchoring'. Thus, the following is a way to understand how design objects - such as the design of Mads Nørgaard - are central in the way people experience their idea of self, and go about doing their everyday routines, and in the way that 'favourites' play a particularly important role in this processual relation.

## Temporal aspects of dress practice

*"In the modern city the new and different sounds the dissonance of reaction to what went before; that moment of dissonance is key to twentieth century style. The colliding dynamism, the thirst for change and the heightened sensation that characterize the city societies, particularly of modern industrial capitalism, go to make up this 'modernity', and the hysteria and exaggeration of fashion well express it"*

(Elizabeth Wilson (2003 [1986]:10)

I understand 'fashion' as a highly dominant, cultural repertoire, which is closely connected with Western modernity. Already in early industrialism, romanticist writers would express how the aesthetic person would indulge in short-term pleasures in order to cope with the 'spleen' of the world: the pain, the melancholy, or as the Germans called it: *Weltschmerz*. As Wilson describes it in the quote above, the fluid, changing and on-going nature of fashion have gone very well, hand in hand, with these ideals, that mirror the forward-moving, linear growth paradigm of industrialism - and as such, with overall ideas of change and progress in Western society. Wilson has also been the one to highlight how fashion has 'adorned us in dreams' through its imagery, and through its capacity to seduce. This correlates well with Shove et al.'s idea that use practices are driven forward by 'images of having' and 'images of doing'. As such, this project evolves around the idea that the 'dream' offered by the fashion industry is transformed into people's 'dream' of future practices and possessions, in the shape of dress objects that are given new meaning in the use phase. Because I am intensely absorbed in the processual aspect of this transformation, I have been looking at the issue of *temporality* in relation to design objects and use practice.

The sartorial system of fashion has had a particular connection with the issue of temporality. Especially during the consumer boom of the post world war generation, as indicated by Cooper (2005), who has stated that before the 1950s, fashion companies were competing on durability and quality, while after this period, they competed on volume and price. In relation to this, paper dresses of the 1960s stand as epitomizing the development towards faster consumption, which culminated in the development of so-called 'fast fashion', with a two-week production cycle, as was introduced by the Spanish

fashion company, *Zara*, in the late 20th Century (Clark 2008). The short-lived frenzy of the paper dresses of the 1960s foreshadows, in many ways, the development of 'fast fashion': during the 'youthquake' of Swinging London in the 1960's, paper dresses epitomized the zenith of all that was young, modern and liberal. In fact, the young generation of the 1960s consumer boom found the short-lived paper dresses to be modern *because* they were thrown away after a few times of use (Palmer in: Sidianakis 2007; Paton, in: Steele (ed.) 2004). The new woman of the 1960s claimed the rights over her own body, her own mind and her own time, and had no intentions of ending up as a housewife. In this transition, the paper dress, with its graphic op-art prints, expressed everything that was new, fast, fun, and modern. It was 'disposable fun', just like many other design objects, at a time when the 'throwaway society' was seeing its heyday.

It is between these logics of fastness and speed, which were developed in the Western world throughout the 20th Century, and the slow, evolving cycles taking place in the wardrobes of my informants, that I see a huge discrepancy between the production and consumption of dress objects. What I will address here is how my model of 'sartorial systems' can help explore how the two logics can be linked through use practices, and to address the concept of 'favourites'. In order to further frame this concept, I will address theories around use practice and temporality. Within these theories, a key idea is that the more people treasure design objects, the more they will take care of them, repair them, and generally do what they can to prolong the use phase. Thereby, what most of these theories are addressing are issues related to sustainability, or the concept of 'slow fashion' as it has been termed by Fletcher (2008), or to 'favourites', as here defined by Klepp:

*"Favourite clothes" represent an environmentally sound choice, because they are well cared for and therefore last longer, and they reduce the need for constant new acquisitions"*

(Ingun Grimstad Klepp (2010: 170))

In this way, a 'less and better' principle for consumption is combined with ideas of a long-term use phase, as opposed to the growth values of the throwaway society. However, I will try to view the theories I am engaged with here in the light of my own research objectives and, as such, will try to remove them for a while from discussions about sustainability, and to use them instead to cast more light on what I experience in the wardrobes of my informants. In this way, there might be strong undercurrents of



sustainable ideas in my work, but I believe it is very important to keep the focus on the issue of dress practices, inasmuch as my central point has to do with how this area has been under-explored and under-theorised.

While the temporal aspect of dress practice seems to have been generally ignored within literature on fashion, it has been extensively explored within material culture studies and, especially conspicuously, within the field of design research. Looking more closely at the studies, it becomes clear that people's daily interaction with design objects is complex, rich and faceted, in a way that extends far beyond dressing for the 'now'. From a material culture studies perspective, Daniel Miller (2009) suggests that there is an intimate connection between people and objects that has to do with communal values and norms rather than economic structures: there is a relation between 'being' and 'having' which is at play in all kinds of societies, and not only in Western post-industrialist ones. What is interesting about Miller's way of understanding the situation is how 'being' is related to the unfolding of time on the one hand, and the space we inhabit on the other. Miller suggests that the relation between human beings and objects has a universal character, which might be practiced somewhat differently in various societies, but is basically the same. If this is so, Jonas and Torben's interaction with their wardrobes over time is not particular to our society, but also displays the way in which we, as humans, generally interact with objects. Within design research, there have been various attempts to explain how this interaction might be understood. James Hunt (2003) suggests that design objects 'freeze' time in the dialectic process between consumer practices (being) and space, and that this entails that given societal norms, values and structures are passed on to consumers through design. Departing from a co-design perspective, Elizabeth Sanders perceives consumer experience with design objects as 'a momentary flash, taking place in time, triggered by previous experiences and future dreams' (Sanders in: Mattelmäki 2007:46). These two respective understandings describe well how Jonas and Torben make use of dress objects as anchoring points throughout their lives; hence, a dress object connects the consumer with societal context, as well as with bodily experiences and with personal ideas of self. What is particularly interesting here is that this connection *evolves over time*.

Within the current literature about sustainability and design, there is a marked interest in how the life cycle of design objects can be prolonged, which involves that design objects are produced to last longer and to be mendable, and not only exist for a short time in people's homes until they are discarded. A relevant question is, then, how people

connect with things so much that they want to keep them longer in use, instead of throwing them away. Because of my own approach to this, I find Papanek's distinctions useful. Papanek (1995) proposes that the current unsustainable behaviour among designers and architects is the direct consequence of how 'understanding and appreciation of a design or building have been seriously handicapped by concentrating almost entirely on our sense of sight', and of how they miss out on 'sens[ing] a dwelling'. In Papanek's view, 'dwelling' is a term symbolizing how creators can apply a more responsible approach to our environment when they design, instead of just 'flooding the world with consumer goods' (ibid:185). Papanek extends this perspective to the use phase, and proposes how 'end users' can contribute to sustainable agendas as well, through considering thoroughly how they can minimize overconsumption in their daily lives. It is in this way that Papanek believes we might eventually be able to 're-establish our connections with nature and with our own roots' (ibid:186), and cast away the 'greed-driven' and 'shameless waste culture' that has been established through a Western, industrialist paradigm of growth.

Papanek, in many ways, relates to ideas of emotional design that, as has been pointed out by Shove et al., often miss out on the temporal perspective of use practice. However, I do think that his concern for the concept of 'dwelling' is particularly interesting, especially because he addresses a link between production and consumption that is more balanced than it is today. A similar approach is to be found in the case of Walker (1995), but in his view, temporality plays a more central role. Walker is also looking for the missing connection between production and consumption, as part of a search for new and more balanced practices:

*"Ever since the early years of the 20th century, when mass-produced consumer goods started to become widely available, products have been promoted as 'new' and 'leading edge' based on two major features - aesthetics and technology. The first encompasses the latest in fashions, styling and colours and is the primary focus of the industrial designer. The second includes such things as functional attributes and gadgetry and is informed more by aspects of engineering. Neither has given us a lasting and meaningful material culture. Rather, they have contributed to the unsustainable, inherently damaging characteristics of our current design and production approaches"*

(Walker ibid:11)

Instead of perpetuating the above described practices, Walker wishes to re-assess 'good' design. His definition of good design is multi-faceted, but what I notice in particular is that he describes its ability to evoke personal emotions in the shape of memories, or other feelings of connection with ideas of self, and with physical and aesthetic experiences that are positive. Walker proposes three parameters that characterise what he calls 'enduring objects'. First, there is the aspect of functionality: to be durable, an object has to be considered useful, safe and effective by its user. Second, there is a social aspect, whereby an enduring object is characterised by its aesthetic and positional qualities. Third, there is what he calls an 'inspirational and spiritual aspect' about an enduring object, which reflects the user's expression of beliefs, and provides the user with religious, magical, and talismanic associations (ibid:39). As an illustrative example, Walker describes how a prayer mat can be seen as 'an object that ties the physical or outer person with the inner, contemplative and spiritual self' (ibid:44). All these aspects are in play in Torben and Jonas' wardrobes, when they select what to wear most, and what to keep for the longest time in their wardrobes. In particular, the associations seen in Walker's prayer mat can be found in Jonas' 'lucky jacket', or in Torben's green shirt: both objects that had a particularly high value to them, which they had nurtured and cherished for years, and which represented both sensory comfort, positional and aesthetic values, and associations of luck, happiness, positive life events, and inner balance. In this way, it reflects what Wilson refers to as dress objects of a 'talisman' character; objects that are given special, almost magical, powers by their users, a psychological mechanism that has been known since ancient times (Wilson 2003).

What I encountered in Torben and Jonas' wardrobes was something that Klepp also found in her study of women in their wardrobes: that new acquisitions move downwards in the wardrobe 'hierarchy' – from the top consisting of dress objects for work or special events, to the bottom consisting of dress objects that come close to be discarded, which are used as homewear or sportswear. Klepp documents that the act of discarding dress objects is often a painful process, which is why her informants' possessions undergo various stages from top to bottom of the wardrobe hierarchy. Often, they are kept 'out of mercy' for a longer period after they have been worn for the last time, before they are thrown out. Klepp also documents that there are three main reasons why women throw out dress objects: first, 'situational obsolescence', which has to do with factors like change of body size, and changes in daily routines/life changes, or simply has to do with the fact that objects have moved downwards in the wardrobe hierarchy because something new and interesting supervened; second, 'functional

obsolescence', which has to do with more technical aspects such as the fading of the colours, structural weaknesses in the product from the outset, or simply that the object is uncomfortable to wear; and third, she posits a category for 'psychological obsolescence', which has to do with how dress objects that corresponded well earlier on with the self-image of her informants eventually become dis-corresponding. Of these, it is the first and the third categories that I find most relevant to my own study, since they evolve around sensory aspects of dressing (i.e. change of body size), and people's ideas on age and ageing.

All in all, I believe that Klepp's study and my own embrace the contradictory aspects of fashion as 'now', and people's wish to connect with their own personal history. What shows through all this is how all kinds of dress objects, and not only fashionable ones, are filtered through various personal criteria by every single person, and that it is these criteria that are decisive for how long a dress object lasts in the wardrobe. This faithfully pinpoints Fletcher's concept of 'slow fashion'. The concept derives from the Italian 'slow food' movement, which also builds on a less-and-better principle (2008). What Fletcher has done in her project, *local wisdom*, is to exemplify how people extend the life cycle of particularly treasured dress objects through the 'craft of use': combining, re-designing and mending them so that they match various life periods, functional demands, and ideas of self (Fletcher 2014).

Just like Fletcher, I see the 'skills' or 'competences' of dressing as a highly creative process, wherein people define and understand themselves through what they wear. I will therefore use 'the Mads Nørgaard project' to read understandings of long lasting design objects up against the backdrop of short-lived 'now' that is inherent in the logics of fashion, in order to be able to comment on the relation between the production and consumption of the brand's design. There is a discrepancy that comes into view when we stop and consider that 'we crave the illusions of stasis, yet we buy the latest in fashion', as Hunt so well describes it (Hunt 2003:60). It is exactly this discrepancy, argues Hunt, which has raised a wide interest for studying everyday practices, because this is where consumers appropriate and transform 'branded life' into their own, personal life. Once design objects leave the shop and enter the realm of people's homes, they are re-evaluated, appropriated and provided with new layers of meaning, which derive from emotional, sensory and psychological experiences of the single user. Thus, my contribution here is to bridge production and consumption through a 'follow the object' approach: to shed some light on what actually happens once a dress object leaves

the shop and enters the home of the consumer. In this way, I wish to hold a magnifying glass and see what happens as the values of a fashion brand are transformed and become part of people's own experiences of self, through their interaction with dress objects. In relation to this, I will make use of the theoretic models of 'sensory anchoring' and 'sartorial systems' for purposes of highlighting various perspectives of what I encounter.

I regard all of this as being highly relevant to the way Torben and Jonas make use of musical genres and related dress styles as their anchoring points, as they develop their idea of self over time. Jørgen Nørgaard was among the first people in the Danish fashion industry to tap into the sartorial system of pop- and counter-culture, and in this way, his shop and design represent the first generations that grew up identifying with certain sounds and images from youth culture. With this history in mind, the brand embraces the way Jonas is aware of changing fashions and aware what is 'new', at the same time that he is very consistent, and even 'conservative', in the choices he makes. What will be interesting to see is how the new set of informants will approve of their new dress objects, and how these objects will move in the respective wardrobe hierarchies. And especially, how this might cast reflections back to the industry.

To sum it up, my research questions for this part of the thesis are the following:

1. How is Mads Nørgaard's design being appropriated in my informants' wardrobes?
2. How might the study contribute with new perspectives on industry practices in general, and on the Nørgaard brand in particular?

## **Method**

A sample of three informants was found for the project; I found Pelle and Michael through my personal network on facebook, and Jacob contacted me via e-mail after he heard me speaking on a radio programme. All three of these men lived up to my criteria

in terms of their respective modes of employment and their respective ages, and they all reside in Copenhagen, so that access to them was easy.

First of all, I wanted to get to know their wardrobes, and I wanted to get a good idea about how they pick out what to wear. So, during the month of November 2011, I conducted a wardrobe session lasting approximately 2 hours in the home of each informant. For the time being, I stuck with to the simple model I had eventually wound up with, where I combined mobile probes and wardrobe sessions, with markedly less concern about the overall structure of the interviews (fig. 1). For instance, I did not ask them to work their way through their wardrobes in any particular order, although I often asked them when they had actually purchased and worn particular dress objects. I stuck to the idea of taking each of the categories of dress objects one at a time, because this was also an easy way of comparing objects. But I more or less veered off from the concept of grading, as I did from other principles from the RepGrid method, because I found them to be too rigid to adapt the flow of conversation. In addition to the making the categorizations, I made every attempt to follow the themes my informants mentioned, since this seemed to work sufficiently, or even better, than making too many 'rules' or restrictions.

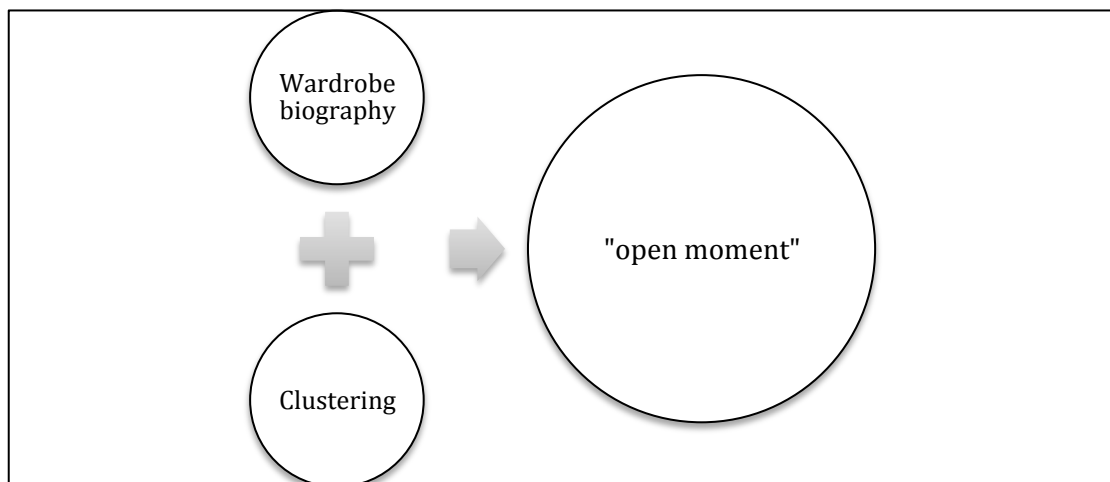


Fig 1: Method design for the wardrobe sessions of all three of the informants, recycled from the method in part 1.

Because of the attention focused on the concept of 'favourites' in this project, I would often ask about physical and mental 'anchoring points' in the wardrobe. So when they were speaking about dress objects they liked in particular, I would ask how these objects felt to wear on their bodies, when they had started wearing them, where this particular style came from, and also how they liked to combine them with other objects.

In this way, it became easier to talk about the more passive objects in the wardrobe, because they could be compared with the active and more treasured ones.

Because of my 'sartorial systems' framework, I was also very interested in their approach to dress styles and to overall utilitarian issues. I would ask them in what context they used their various dress objects, and whether or not it was successfully fulfilling its purpose. These contexts could involve anything from social situations, through work- and leisure-time, to partying and dating. Because I had found that Torben and Jonas could articulate highly personal definitions and descriptions of their style, I was very open to personal definitions from my new set of informants as well. I wished, at least potentially, to cut a swatch loose from any pre-defined stylistic references in order to allow a space where they could define their own references. I have therefore based my mapping of their wardrobes on the basis of these personal definitions, a mapping that I regard as being highly descriptive of the impression I had during the sessions.

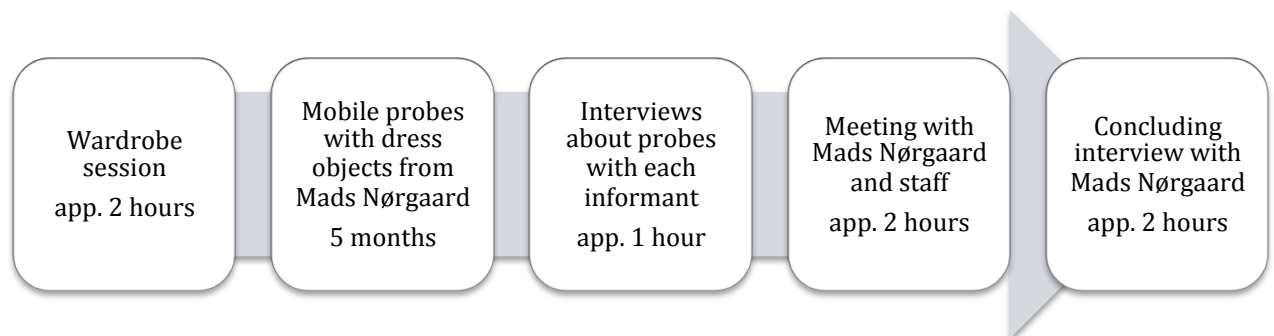
Second, I wanted my informants to be provided with dress objects from Mads Nørgaard's menswear design, and to find out what would happen once these objects became part of their individual wardrobes. Mads Nørgaard therefore offered to provide each of the informants with two dress objects of his own choice, selected from his AW11 menswear collection.

On the 19th of December 2011, Michael, Jacob and Pelle met in the showroom at Mads Nørgaard's place of business at Amager Square 15, on the ground floor. Present at this meeting were the Mads Nørgaard firm's head of PR, and intermittently, an assistant who had placed the AW11 menswear collection on hangers and in cardboard boxes, from which the three informants could choose. The staff let me talk with my informants without interfering too much. Because I had contacted Michael, Jacob and Pelle via e-mail in order to set up the sessions, I attached a link to the collection, writing them that they each could choose two items. Immediately after the visit, I went home and made notes about what objects each of the men had chosen to take home, how they reacted in the showroom, and how the staff of Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen responded to the men.

After this, I asked the men to send me a photo each and every time they wore one of these objects. For a period of 5 months, up until May 2012, they were to send me these photos, along with a small commentary about the context and the purpose of their outfit.

Only in part did this come to function according to my intentions: Pelle sent me only one single photo during the 5 months, even if he wore the objects very often. When we agreed to meet in his home, he had forgotten all about our appointment. However, I did manage to get him to take some photos of the most used ensembles he had worn together with the Nørgaard designs, and then we had a long conversation on the phone on the basis of that. Jacob managed to send me, all in all, 13 photos, but he told me he had used his two styles much more than that – including one of them on a weekly basis. Michael sent me photos every time he wore either of his styles, except for the period when he was on his holiday in Iceland. Michael sent me, all in all, 27 photos. In spite of these irregularities, I was still able to understand what had happened with the Nørgaard styles after they left the showroom, and to understand much about how my three informants had appropriated these articles in their wardrobes.

Right after these sessions, comprising this phase of the study, on May 15, 2012, I had a meeting with the sales manager, the head of the menswear design team, and Mads Nørgaard himself. The focus of this meeting was to further inform these three individuals about my project, and to discuss with them how the project could eventually be related to their work. For the meeting, I had brought my computer along and I showed the three people clippings from my footage, as well as printouts of the probes. I used this meeting as a good opportunity to discuss my ideas and reflections thus far, and to get some idea about whether my project would make sense to them. After this, I went home and started the process of transcribing, coding and analysing the whole material. Finally, Mads Nørgaard and I agreed that I would be sending him this part of the thesis. First of all, I wanted to make sure there were no misunderstandings or points of indiscretion being communicated in my material. But most of all, it gave me the opportunity to obtain his feedback on my ideas and analysis, and to implement his reflections in the project. Accordingly, the entire project has been structured as displayed in the figure below:





## IN THE WARDROBES

### Michael

Michael is 48 years old and lives, together with his family, in an apartment in Copenhagen. He works as an industrial and graphic designer in his own company, and free-lances as a teacher at a design school. I had met Michael through work and asked him to be part of my project. I had noticed his style of dressing, since it is distinctly characteristic. He wears glasses with a heavy, brown plastic frame, which serves to enhance his eyes. And then he always wears brown colours. His home is also very characteristic, because he has made a lot of the interior design himself, which shows in all kinds of details such as the colour of a door, the knobs on the kitchen cabinets, and the two-level floor in the kitchen area. Entering his bedroom, he shows me his and his girlfriend's shared wardrobe closet, a white wall-to-wall closet that he has decorated with organic, black shapes that look like trees or plants, curling their way towards large knobs that look like flowers. When he opens up his own two cabinets, I can immediately see that what he keeps in there is not so designer-like and colour-matched as what I've seen in the rest of his apartment. However, this appears to be because he owns an extensive wardrobe. Later on, it comes to light that he is in the middle of a transition phase from one style of dressing to another, which means that he keeps a lot of passive objects that he is not yet ready to discard. Since he turns out to be quite a compulsive shopper, there are also many shopping mistakes. Michael thinks about his wardrobe in terms of fixed ensembles, and he also purchases fixed ensembles that he thinks look good in the shop. But he often returns home to find that they don't look so good on him.

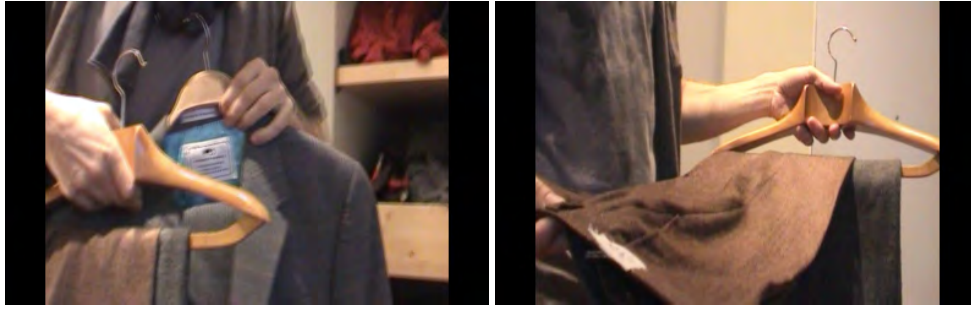


Michael and his customized wardrobe closet

In the right-side cabinet with two rows of hangers, he stores suits, blazers, shirts, formal trousers and ties. In his other cabinet, with 8 drawers, he stores long-sleeved T-shirts, short-sleeved T-shirts, socks, underwear, casual trousers and jeans. Under a bookshelf in the bedroom he stores a part of his shoe collection. In a large drawer under his homemade bed, he stores sweaters and other knitwear. In the hallway, he stores overcoats and more footwear. Finally, he stores some rather passive footwear in his music room, which is right next to the bedroom. I start the session by saying that I basically want to get to know his wardrobe, and to learn about what goes on while he dresses. I also tell him that he can pick out any category and tell me about that. Michael picks out a brown, woollen suit, then moves to some of the remaining suits and formal trousers, and then to the shirts. These objects are all on the hangers. From there, he moves on to the T-shirts that he stores in a drawer, to the knitwear in the drawer under the bed, to shoes, and finally to outerwear.

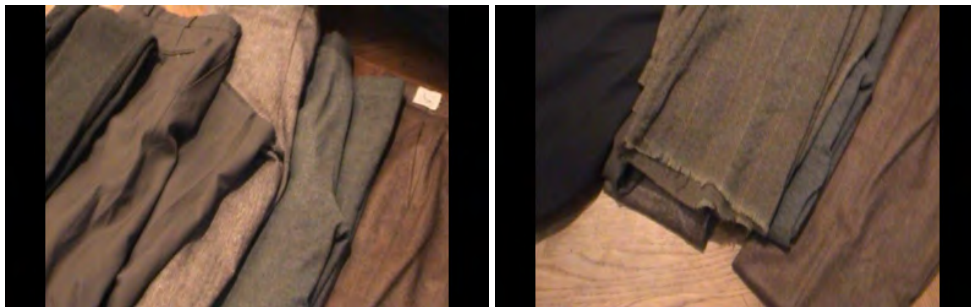
### *DDR Style - the 90s is my decade*

As he takes out the first brown, woollen suit from the hanger, he starts talking about a dress style he calls 'DDR style'. It is a tailored suit in brown wool that he had made at a tailor in Shanghai while traveling there. Unfortunately, an accident happened at the cleaners' shop over there, so the trousers shrank. A friend had the tailor make a new pair after Michael's departure, but the fabric was not the same. Now he doesn't quite know what to do about the suit, but he doesn't want to discard it.



The tailor suit he had made in Shanghai - a 'perfect tailor' made the suit but he cannot wear at all, because the coat and the trousers are of different fabrics.

It bears a familiarity with Michael's other suits and 9 pairs of brown woollen trousers, which are no longer as active as they were 5-10 years ago. They are all quite similar in cut, colour and material. He tells me that he started wearing brown when the retro style was dominating in the late 1990s. When I ask him why, he says that he 'was riding with the current'. He also says that the 90s is 'my decade', that 'it's like home to be brown', and that 'brown is a winner in my world'.



Michael's many brown and grey woollen formal trousers - to the right are his absolute favourite ones, which are now badly torn.

At one point, he tells me more about how he started wearing this style. He was very fascinated with the DDR in the 1980s and 1990s, and he liked shopping in 2Hand shops, and in a few, favourite shops in Berlin. As we continue talking about this, I mention that I have just seen some pictures of disguises for agents in the DDR period, which were published by Simon Menner. When I send him these photos after the session, he tells me that this is indeed the style that he is talking about. He has been fascinated with the whole style, including the colour palette, the uniforms worn by the police and the military at the time, and the often graphically elaborate 1970s prints of shirts, as displayed on the pictures below. He says that he found the DDR to be:

**A dark mysterious country, something other than the well known. Something cool and perverted**



From the Simon Menner website, © Simon Menner 2013: authentic photos of DDR agents wearing disguises.

Alongside this style, Michael stores a lot of dress objects from 2Hand shops in what he calls 'retro style': shirts with big collars, graphic prints, and often made in non-iron fabrics. There is a whole range of cardigans, long-sleeved T-shirts and a ski jacket in fabrics and colour combinations that were very typical of the 1970s, such as brown combined with green and orange, bright green combined with bright yellow and red, or variations of brown, and there are lots of synthetic materials.



Some of the many 1970s-style objects in Michael's wardrobe, many of them purchased in 2Hand shops. There are many shirts with graphic prints and very big collars, lots and lots of brown objects such as the long-sleeved T-shirt (left) made out of terry cloth, and various pullovers in synthetic stretch materials and bright colours, such as the green article of clothing pictured on the right.

Even if Michael defines these objects as the ones he feels are 'home', most of them are passive. What this entails, actually, is that large parts of his wardrobe are passive, and it turns out there are more reasons for this. First of all, he does not like to wear woollen trousers at all, because they scratch his skin, and are generally too hot to wear indoors. When he was younger, he didn't care about this: he just wanted to get the look 'right'. In order to solve the scratching problem, he had lining sewn into the trouser-legs of his absolute favourite brown trousers, which he wore a lot up until 5-7 years ago. Now, they have become badly worn. Still, he hasn't thrown them out, even if he obviously doesn't

wear them anymore. Another problem is the size. Like Jonas, Michael is very tall, and he has had huge problems finding objects of the right size in second hand boutiques. So, like Jonas, he has made a virtue of necessity, which is why he has simply made short sleeves and short trouser-legs integral parts of his dress style. However, Michael claims that he has not been all that aware of this, even if he tells me that in some cases, he has had some trousers shortened, because he didn't like them to be long:

**I felt that they covered my shoes in a way that I didn't really like: in a sales-man kind of way, *ha-ha*. And I even think that it's cool when they are short, in a Mod kind of way**

However, this has changed, because his girlfriend doesn't like him wearing dress objects that are too short. This comes out when we turn our attention to a T-shirt that he believes has shrunk throughout several washes. I tell him that I am quite sure that this is not possible. Then, he responds:

**It might be that my idea about what is too small has changed. But I really do think that they have gotten smaller since I purchased them, *ha-ha*. I guess that it's just something I'm imagining, and it might just be because my girlfriend tells me they are too short. I just hadn't noticed, earlier.**

All in all, there are more parameters at play that have caused him to move away from the homey and safe universe of his DDR/retro style towards something new. First, he finds some of the ensembles he used to wear to be too youthful to work for him today, and in some case, he even finds them 'silly'. This can be said, for example, about a 2Hand trench coat with sleeves that are far too short, which he used to combine with short'ish brown woollen trousers, and about his favourite burgundy Dr. Martens boots. Or ties, about which he says:

**Once I wore ties, just for the fun of it. It was really young and fun to wear a tie. I wore them around my head.**

Second, just like Torben, he has adjusted his wardrobe to the tastes of his girlfriend, which means that the 'right size' for him is now different than what it was before. This jibes with the fact that he mentions, at one point, that they have just had their 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a couple, and also mentions, on a number of occasions, that he stopped wearing many of his brown dress objects around 5-7 years ago.

## Work

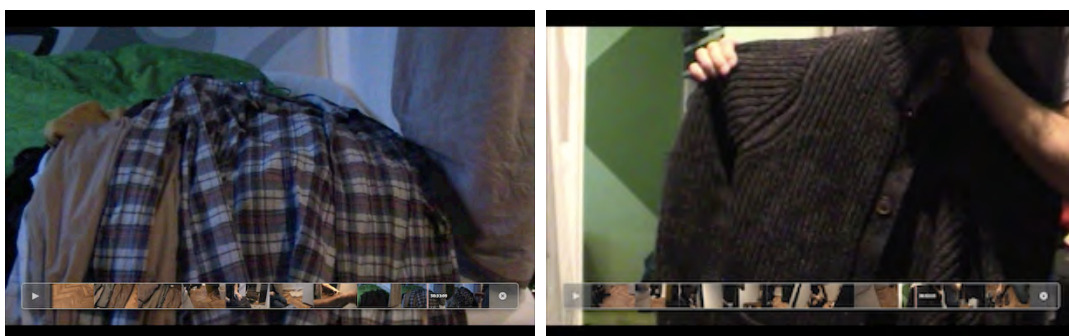
Like both Torben and Jonas, Michael has spent some time thinking about how to dress for work, and this has caused changes in his wardrobe. When he started to work as an industrial and graphic designer, he would often find it appropriate to wear a suit to business meetings, so as to look 'business-like'. However, he has found that this doesn't really work out, since there's a mismatch with his role as the 'creative' person:

**A designer doesn't turn up in a suit: it wouldn't be expected. It would be overdressing. My line of work is more chameleon-like. As a designer, I don't want to bring a particular style into a room. I try to adapt as well as possible: to inscribe myself right into their market.**

For this reason, he only wears his suits now when he is dressing up for going to a restaurant, a party, or a theatre play with his girlfriend. For work, he has come up with different criteria and different rules for dressing that matches the various needs of different types of clients.

When he meets with engineers or with what he calls 'ID clients' (ID for Industrial Design), he wears a particular combination of two objects that he finds works well, which is a shirt with a white, blue and red check pattern that he combines with jeans. When he needs to look more 'representative', he can also wear a particular cardigan that he finds to be very 'adult'. He says:

**This kind of very classical shirt with jeans is a bit all-American jumberlack, sort of regular guy kind of type. I wear this for engineer clients, where I am not supposed to be too designer-like. You can trust a man in a checked shirt**



Michael's most 'adult' dress objects: a checked shirt and a cardigan

As a teacher, he makes a lot of use of what he calls 'the lecturer style'. This style has been building to a great extent on his many brown outfits, although he has recently started to wear shirts that are longer, so that they 'get a length that for once actually fits



my upper body'. On the photo below are his 'lecturer Frederiksen' shoes: brown, in full-grain leather and with references to the 1970s. About these shoes, he says:

**Here comes lecturer Frederiksen, and not as much designer Frederiksen.**

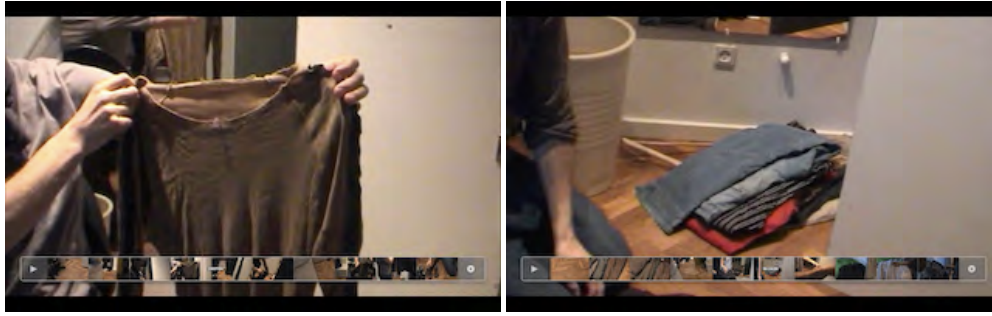


Michael's 'lecturer' shoes

Altogether, he seems to wear his own, personal style for most clients. The main difference between most meetings and working at home is that when he works at home, he wears very comfortable objects like long-sleeved T-shirts, which he finds are a bit too informal for clients. Apart from these small adjustments, he mostly wears the same kinds of clothes in both situations.

### *Rock music*

Michael still rehearses regularly with his rock band, and now and then they play live concerts. For this, he likes to look 'a bit rock'n'roll' or 'like a punk rebel'. He has dress objects that he uses particularly for this look, which include his grey canvas 'Sgt. Pepper' jacket and a tight and short black leather jacket, a pair of bright red jeans, and a pair of canvas trousers with blue and white stripes. These are objects that he can wear on stage, or when going out. He also has a light brown long-sleeved T-shirt made out of cotton with black fake leather appliqué on the sleeves, which he uses only for concerts. It is very worn and too big, which is why his naked shoulders are displayed when the neckline falls, as he moves around on stage.



Michael's long-sleeved T-shirt, worn only for concerts (left), and his heap of 'rock'n'roll' trousers, of which the striped blue and white one, and the red one are the most treasured.

Even if this part of his wardrobe is quite limited, it is connected to Michael's idea about authenticity. This comes out as we talk about his only hoodie, that he likes but still makes him feel 'younger than I actually am, in a kind of fake way'. When I ask him why, he replies:

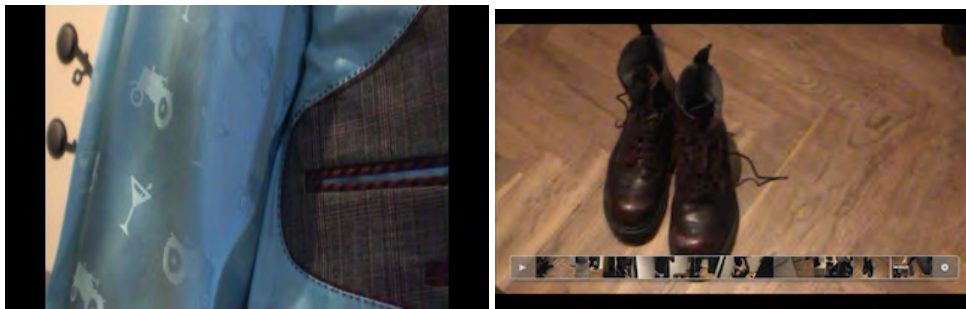
**I grew up with the idea that punk was cool, and that hip-hop was a bit pop-ish, false and fake. To me, hip-hop doesn't have the same authenticity as rock or jazz**

*Summary: a new body - a new colour*

Michael's wardrobe is undergoing a phase of transition. There is a majority of dress objects that he believes he ought to discard, but this seems to be difficult for him to do. He is also in search of something new, which is starting to show. Through his girlfriend, he is becoming aware that he needs dress objects that fit his tall body, and once he starts to wear these objects, it's as if 'a new Michael appears before me. Whereas the 'old' Michael looked a little sweet and goofy in his brown, almost cartoonish outfits, I start to see a Michael that is much more conscious of his good looks. At the time of the interview, he happens to be experimenting with two silhouettes for his upper body; a slim, body-enhancing silhouette, which he creates with slim-line shirts and tight-fitting long-sleeved T-shirts, and cardigans that also seem kind of long; and another silhouette that he calls 'floppy', where he wears objects that are too big, and thereby exposes his shoulders, which makes him look even taller and thinner. At the interview, he wears a pair of recently purchased trousers that diverge remarkably from his brown woollen trousers, but are quite similar to the long and slender shape of his 'rock'n'roll' pants. He is also undergoing a transition phase in terms of colours. In recent years, his hair has turned grey, and he has started to wear a lot of grey. But he is not satisfied with this because he feels that then he becomes far too grey, altogether. A new idea he has hit



upon is to wear brighter colours in order to establish contrasts. Cognate colours that are repeated in this new palette are blue, turquoise-blue, greenish-blue, and petrol colour. He is starting to work out fixed ensembles that he can wear for his various clients, leisure time, dating and family time, ensembles that can replace the old ones. As we go through the wardrobe, he often expresses how he would like to own more objects that he calls 'one-offs', objects that have their own character. He regrets that such objects are often very expensive. On the other hand, he is quite an impulsive shopper, and stores many shopping mistakes because he fell for the matching ensemble in the window display. What is consistent is how, when he wants to describe his favourite dress objects, he often refers to his work as an industrial and graphic designer. He will often mention how he likes the graphic elements of a pattern or a print, and what appears to be very typical of his reports is that he thinks of his grey hair and his new outfits in colour combinations. As if he were himself an article of graphic design.



Michael's idea of 'one-offs' is expressed in, for example, his suit from the brand Moods of Norway, with its designer details in the linen, articulated in his new grey-and-blue scale. To the right, his favourite Dr. Martens boots, which refer to his penchant for the punk style, the 1970s, and the DDR-military style.

### *In the showroom at Nørgaard*

After being invited to the initial session, Michael wrote back to me that he could turn up but that he was very apprehensive. This is what he wrote:

**Thanks. I hope you don't regards me as being really ungrateful, but it might be difficult to find two dress objects in this collection that I would actually like to wear. I should have checked out what kind of design Mads Nørgaard makes before saying yes to being a part of this - sorry. Could we use Henrik Vibskov instead?**

I told him that, unfortunately, I had no collaboration going on with Henrik Vibskov, but that I hoped he would give it a try. When he arrived, he took his time, and commented on the styles that he examined that were in the boxes and on the hangers. He repeatedly touched the fabric, and looked closely at the colour combinations. All in all, he found

four objects interesting. He looked at the style, 'Kant Iceland', an Icelandic sweater with a turtleneck. He found that the black and white stripes on the rib were 'interesting', but then he said that it became 'conforming and boring' on the body and sleeves, so he didn't want to pick that one. He also tried on a 'Klemens Zip Kontrast Style' sailor sweater, with a neon orange zipper. He liked it very much, but said that he had promised himself not to buy any grey. It had to be a new colour, something he didn't have at home. Eventually, he chose a blue cardigan in the 'Carl Lambswool' style, with a black logo on the chest and black elbow patches, and a bright red turtleneck sailor sweater. As he was leaving the store, he commented that he was quite surprised about how much he liked the two objects, and that he was very pleased.



Michael looked at this Icelandic sweater and this sailor sweater, but picked out, instead, a red turtleneck sailor sweater and a blue cardigan with black elbow patches.

### *Second session*

Even though Michael has been very apprehensive about wearing Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen, he had worn the articles that he chose a good many times. He had also been very good at documenting this for me, which meant that when I arrived at his flat for the second time, there was a lot to discuss. I started out by placing print outs of all his ensembles with the Nørgaard objects on his dining table, and then we started talking. I told him that I had found it amusing to see that he had been so reluctant at first, and then had sent me a veritable tsunami of photos, especially of the red sweater, and he replied:

**I have tried not to be influenced by the fact that I knew you wanted some photos, but I guess I wasn't entirely unaffected by this. I wouldn't regard it as appropriate if I hadn't worn it [the red sweater] at all. But I really liked it for a while. I do need to wear a long-sleeved T-shirt underneath, though, to prevent it from scratching. The cardigan, on the other hand, has been worn quite frequently**

As we look at the printouts, he says that, first of all, he has to own up to being a 'serial monogamist' when it comes to dressing. As he told me during the first session, he develops fixed ensembles, so that he is free of concerns when he gets dressed. He then wears these ensembles for a period of time, with very little variations. Michael had developed fixed ensembles for the two objects that he believed worked out well. For the blue cardigan, he has developed a fixed ensemble with a white, long-sleeved cotton T-shirt and his favourite blue canvas trousers, and this ensemble was used for meetings with clients, when teaching, and for home office days. He said this ensemble worked a bit 'above average' when he wore it with a scarf and belt, such as when he used it for teaching. He feels that he has made an effort here, that it is 'a bit dandy, but also too nice'. Another fixed ensemble was comprised of a purple, long-sleeved T-shirt, the blue cardigan, and a new pair of trousers similar to his favourite ones. He has not been very pleased with this. As we discuss these ensembles, he says:

**This articulates an intention about colours: that now it's not supposed to be so super-grey in my wardrobe. Which means that this [the purple, long-sleeved T-shirt] is actually an 'I-need-something-for-my-cardigan' kind of purchase. But I tell you, it will not be combined again with my cardigan, not after seeing *this* photo!**

So, the long-sleeved purple T-shirt is yet another 'shopping mistake', which was purchased because it might work out for a fixed ensemble. As such, it has something in common with lots of the other shopping mistakes in his wardrobe. As might be visible on his photos, he ran into trouble using shirts underneath the cardigan, because of his long arms. He folds up the shirtsleeves, and they bulk up under the rather tight sleeves of the cardigan. This doesn't work out. Finally, he has been experimenting with ensembles where he combined the cardigan with long-sleeved T-shirts and his 'rock'n'roll' trousers. This was for home office days. He tried out the red ones and the striped ones, but they didn't really work out, either.



Michael's experiments with ensembles for the blue cardigan: his purple long-sleeved T-shirt, and his check-pattern shirt. Both ensembles include his favourite blue canvas trousers.

The red sailor sweater was a bit more popular. He says that:

**I had a grey period, and I didn't find that it worked well with my grey hairs - they need to be lightened up with some colour, and I think that works. A bit of 'pang'.**

He has used the sweater for all kinds of contexts: for teaching, for client meetings, for picking up his daughter in kindergarten, for travelling, and for social events with family, friends and colleagues. Because the sweater is quite warm, some of his ensembles are for outdoor use, and he has experimented with various overcoats. The outdoor ensemble he prefers is the one with his brown leather jacket. But still, he feels that while the jacket 'is too much in tone with the trousers', the sweater just 'runs off'. To a great extent they are 'each in their own corner'. This gets even worse when he combines the red sweater with his brown 1970s style corduroy jacket, or with his padded winter jacket in a dusty army green. The most highly appreciated ensemble is a combination with his favourite trousers and his Dr. Martens boots, where he finds that 'the bordeaux colour doesn't have the same intensity, but binds the colours together'. This means that when he wears this ensemble *without* the boots, he feels that:

**Colourwise, I kind of become that sweater when I wear it, then I become a sweater with a man inside of it. I am more partial to more neutral colours.**

There is some ambivalence here - he would like more colour, but not too much.

Apparently, the red nuance here is 'too much', but still represents what he is looking for in the transition phase he is currently going through.



Outdoor ensembles for the red sailor sweater. Left, with his dusty army-green padded coat. Right, with his brown leather jacket.



Indoor ensembles for the red sailor sweater. Left, with his favourite trousers and his home office glasses. Right, the same ensemble, now in combination with his bordeaux Dr. Martens boots.

All in all, the two objects never really became favourites in Michael's wardrobe, and he also claimed they were 'the least bad' of what he could find. Still, as he comes to think back on the session we had in the showroom, he is surprised to note how much he does appreciate them. He is certain that these two objects were not part of the collection I sent him, but considers that this might very well be because he could not touch the fabric as he was checking out the website, and couldn't see the elbow patches, which were some of the details he liked about the cardigan. At the time of the second session, he had already stopped using both objects as frequently as he had been using them in the beginning.

## Jacob

Jacob is 55 years old and lives with his family in an apartment in Copenhagen. At the time of the interview, he was working as a body-sds [body-self-development-system] therapist, a part time sales consultant, and a consultant on smaller projects. When I arrive, I am offered coffee and bread, and we have a nice talk. Before I start filming, Jacob asks me not to film his working table in the corner of his bedroom, since he finds it embarrassingly messy. He says the same about his drawers in his wardrobe closet. Throughout the sessions with Jacob, I find this politeness and sensibility very characteristic of the way he stores and uses his dress objects. But I also find another side of Jacob and his wardrobe, which he has mentioned in our mail correspondence: his penchant for expressing himself with *aparte* and spectacular objects such as weird hats, wigs, or uniforms. Throughout the session, I try to understand more about these two sides of his dress practice: how they are connected to his past, how they have emerged and evolved, and how he navigates between them in his everyday life.

In his bedroom, he has 3 wardrobe cabinets where he stores his dress objects. Unlike my other informants, this is his private wardrobe closet, as his wife's wardrobe is elsewhere in the apartment. To the left, he has one cabinet with shelves and thread baskets. In the two thread baskets at the bottom, he stores shoes - then there is a thread basket with belts. In the drawers, he stores socks, gloves and scarfs, and parts of his collection of caps. To the right, there is a double cabinet with a large top shelf, a hanger, two large shelves and two tread baskets at the bottom. On the top shelf, he keeps a cardboard box with his articles of jewellery and accessories, such as badges, watches, cufflinks and other memorabilia in the same category. Here, he also stores dress objects from his past that are no longer in use. On the hangers, he keeps shirts, blazers, and suits. Behind these objects he keeps shirts and trousers wrapped up in plastic bags. In the top drawer under the hangers, he stores trousers, and in the drawer just below this one, T-shirts. In the two thread baskets, he keeps, in the upper one, stuff from work and in the bottom one, pharmaceutical products for his diabetes, along with grooming products. What strikes me at first glance is how much he stores, and also that he appears to know where all of his dress objects are kept.



He is very systematic in the way he manages his wardrobe. All of the objects are easy to find, and it seems like he has categorised all that he stores so that he can easily find what he needs for various purposes such as being at a party, spending leisure time, or doing different types of work. Jacob starts by telling me about his various categories of shirts, for various purposes. Then he moves on to T-shirts, and then goes back again to talk about the party costumes that are mostly stored on the hangers. Then he goes through his drawer with trousers, goes back to the cabinet with hangers and finds a box with various memorabilia, and then moves on to shoes. Finally, he shows me his accessories.

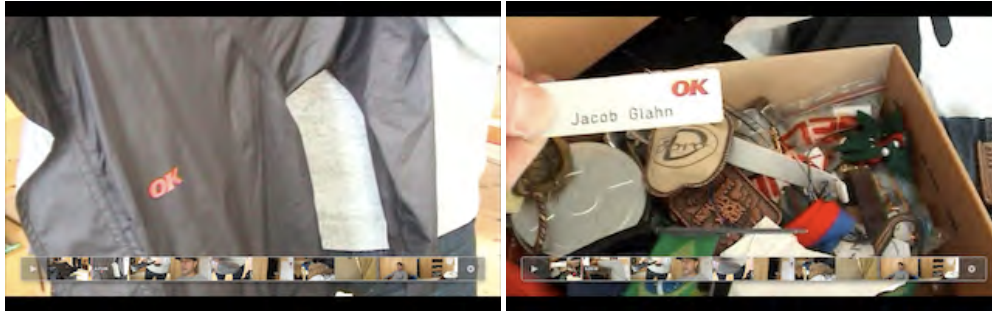
### *The chameleon*

In Jacob's wardrobe, there are outfits for various renditions of himself, which he plays out in connection with various types of work. The versions that I am presented to throughout the course of our wardrobe session are what he calls, respectively, 'the shipping man', 'the light person', 'the OK man', and 'the therapist'. All these versions of Jacob are put in play in his work routines. His working week at the time of the interview is divided up, and matches these various personae. In his own words,

**Then, I change my skin, so that when I turn up for the job, I *am* this man. This has been a way of surviving.**

Two days a week, he works at the body-sds therapeutic clinic, where he gives treatments. For this work, he has a line of T-shirts and a jacket with the logo and name of the clinic he works at.

Another important outfit at the time of the interview is his outfit for the company, OK (a large Danish energy company), for which he has various tasks that are spread all throughout the week. When he works for OK, he is fully equipped with logo-embossed clothing, consisting of T-shirts, trousers, an overcoat and a badge.



Workwear for Jacob's job at the Danish energy company, 'OK'.

His remaining ensembles are more closely connected to Jacob's own personal tastes, but they are still adjusted for the purpose of matching with his respective clients. These ensembles range from rather expensive, dressy styles, to more casual ones. As such, they can be positioned in the following hierarchy:

At the top, he has three dress objects of the brand Hugo Boss: shoes, slim fit trousers, and a matching business bag. For this ensemble, he prefers shirts of the Eton brand. He has several of these. Some are dress shirts that accommodate cufflinks, and some are a bit more casual, such as one with alternating narrow stripes in a white and slightly see-through fabric. This one he likes, because he finds it 'particularly trendy right now'.



Elements in Jacob's formal, dressy outfit: his Hugo Boss shoes; and his Eton shirts

Less dressy but nonetheless formal outfits for 'the more architect-like', or 'this light person', are shirts that are slightly more fashionable than the Eton shirts. This could be a white shirt with a discrete print of blue dotted lines, a discretely check-patterned shirt in white and light blue, or a denim shirt. He says that these shirts are typically a bit more 'sporty' than the dressy shirts. He mostly wears these shirts with black jeans, because he says that

**For meetings with few people, then there is the white shirt and these days, mostly black jeans. This is more and more the general business uniform, if you are not wearing those kinds of business trousers.**



Finally, he has a more informal heap of shirts that he wears when the meetings with clients happen to be connected to social events in the evening, such as restaurant visits or drinks. Then he will adjust his outfit to these by wearing shirts like this that are considered more casual. They are more colourful than the ones in the other heaps, though they are primarily confined to blue, brown or white nuances.



Jacob's shirts for combined meetings and social events with clients (left), and his heap of semi-formal shirts (right)

As he works his way through his drawers and shelves, he takes out plastic bags with brand new shirts or jeans he has never worn. He buys these objects when he has the time, because he believes that since he works more than most people do, he rarely has the time to shop. Moreover, he actually likes wearing new articles for more formal meetings, 'because it needs to be a little bit fresh'. Therefore it is convenient for him to keep this stock of new objects in his wardrobe.

When Jacob comes home, he pulls on what he calls 'my own clothes', and this helps him to feel at home. He says that it's a matter of 'cleaning out'. In this category, I find that Jacob is indeed quite aware of fashion. For example, he has a large Burberry scarf, 'which is very fashionable right now', and a coat and trousers of the 'SuperDry' brand. He wears this when at home, to parent meetings at his children's school, or 'if I cast off the business profile'. In this category, there are traces of Jacob's past working life. Jacob has worked in the United States and in Brazil for approximately 10 years. He was trained in the area of shipping; in connection with this work, he also travelled around the world. In his wardrobe, he stores lots of memorabilia from these years. Jacob has been a member of 'Dansk Land-Rover klub' (The Danish Landrover Club), for 25 years, and also stores T-shirts and sweatshirts from this period. He also keeps a box with all kinds of badges, key ring souvenirs, flags, belt buckles, jewellery boxes with cufflinks, and watches. These objects are memorabilia from his family and friends, from his wife, and from all the places he has worked and travelled. Similar to this, he has a thread basket with belts and accessories, such as an authentic crocodile skin belt.



Jacob's box with memorabilia, and his belt collection with, among other things, his authentic crocodile belt – 'from my time in Africa'.

In the part of his wardrobe that he calls 'my own', he has several objects made out of leather. Throughout his life, he has had several leather jackets and coats, often in brown leather. Some guys he knows told him about a shop in Copenhagen that sells stuff from Australia, and this style still appeals to him. There, he bought a pair of light-brown suede trousers, a pair of Chelsea boots in brown full-grain leather, and a V-neck pullover with a check pattern. While the pullover was a 'shopping mistake', he really does like the boots and the trousers.



Jacob's brown suede trousers from an Australian fashion shop in Copenhagen (hiding under the pullover), and his truly beloved brown leather jacket.

Some of these objects, all of which share the element of animal skin or other wild life references, or of travels far away, are very closely connected to Jacob's personal history. He has travelled the whole world, and has worked in all kinds of trades, from shipping to tourist guiding, and he tells me that he has always liked the 'action around doing business'. For each of these jobs, there seems to be a new uniform. Very telling of this is that for years, he called his company: *multi task force*.

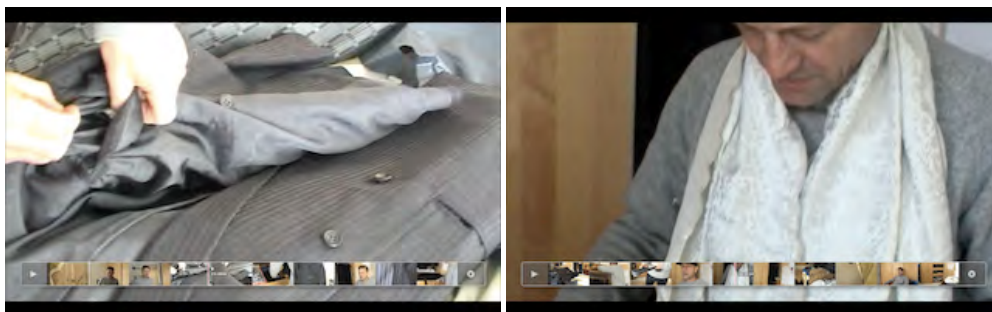
Even if black jeans are part of most of these uniforms today, Jacob actually really dislikes black. Several times during the session, he has outbursts, and launches into extended monologues about how black is such a boring colour, and that it is so very dangerous in the winter traffic. It makes people invisible, and he dislikes that. For example, he says:

**Society has accepted black to such an incredible extent, and I don't like that. Firstly, black is being used to hide behind the black colour. We are so conservative in Denmark, when it comes to menswear. It's so *boring*. Really boring. So I just go berserk!**

When he started showing me his party wardrobe, I could tell that he was right. Here was a complete different Jacob than the polite, sensible guy who irons his shirts and wears his work uniforms. And moreover, this is the part of Jacob's wardrobe that his more conservative wife and his daughters dislike so much, with the result that he only wears these dress objects when he goes out partying with friends.

### *Party costumes*

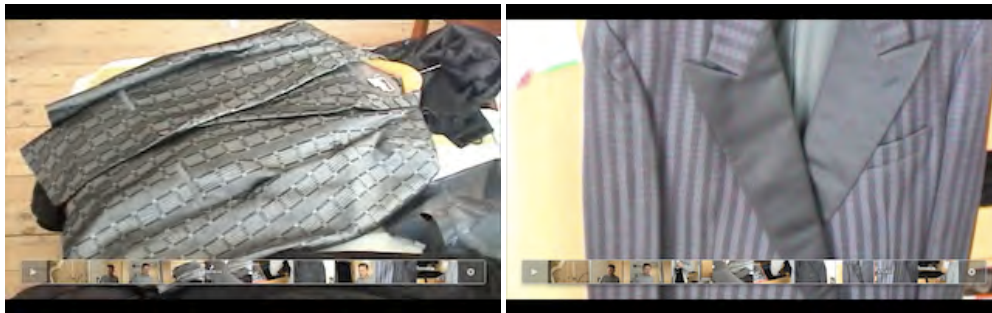
Jacob describes this part of the wardrobe as his 'party skin - this is when my wife doesn't come with me'. This part of his wardrobe that runs the gamut from the highest quality of tailoring to glittery cheap accessories purchased in from supermarkets. Starting in the high-quality end, he shows me a tailored suit from Saville Row in London that he had made in 1986. He's very fond of this suit. It was, of course, very expensive, and he is especially proud of the personalised detail that the fabric is turned inside out, so that the reverse side is visible. This was done in response to his own request. He used to wear it for going to work, and liked the fact that his colleagues could tell it was an expensive suit. He is aware that the cut is out of fashion, and it is too large, since he was larger and more muscular when he was younger, but he would like to have it adjusted by a tailor so that he can keep on wearing it. In ensemble with this suit, he wears his most dressy, white shirts, with cufflinks. He might also wear a silk scarf that he inherited from his grandfather, who wore it with a full evening dress. Jacob has worn same combination as well, on rare occasions.



From left to right: Jacob's tailored suit, purchased and made for him on Saville Row, and the silk scarf that he inherited from his grandfather.

Jacob also owns suits that are far more flamboyant, such as a silvery suit with a pattern that he thinks looks like filmstrips. He bought it 5-10 years ago in a 2Hand shop in Vancouver, and he is very delighted with and proud of this suit, because it is a suit that he believes needs backbone to wear, because it draws a lot of attention. He also has another 2Hand suit 'of older date', that he still wears from time to time. It is of the same category as the silvery one: for partying. All of his suits are double-breasted, because

**That was modern when I was in New York in 1983-88, to wear double-breasted suits: we were a few guys who strutted our stuff in that way.**

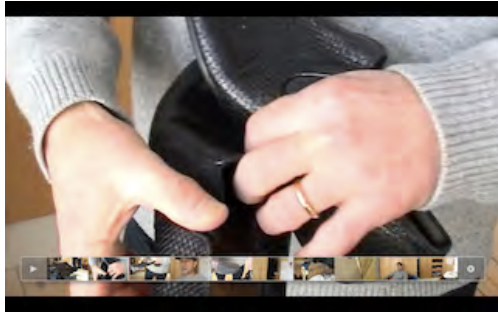


Jacob's two double-breasted suits, which he wears for partying.

Jacob tells me that when he worked in the shipping business in his younger years, he always wore suits for work, and then when he came home, 'then I had to go berserk, instead of all that conservative stuff'. A favourite object for this were the 'shrink-to-fit' jeans, which he says are still the guiding standard for how he likes a pair of jeans to be. He used to love wearing a new pair in a hot shower, to make them shrink. While he hasn't got any of these jeans anymore, there are other things that are very precious to him, which he has had for many years. For example, he tells me about his favourite black leather dancing shoes, about which he says:

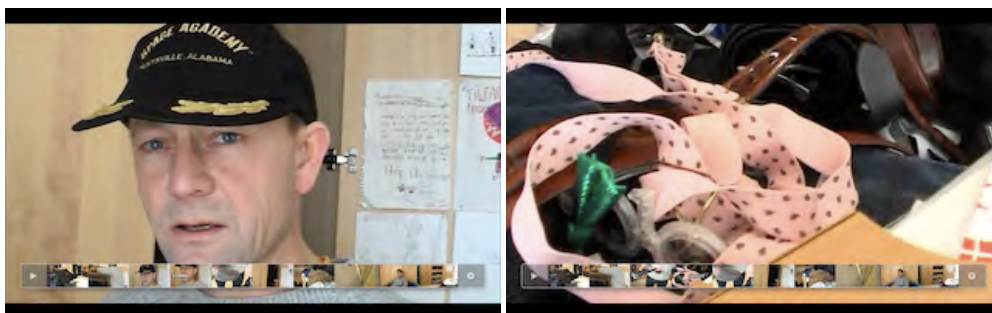
**And then there are these ones, they are really important. They're my favourite shoes. They have danced at so many discotheques, and have gotten so worn out. But I love them. I will *never* get rid of them!**

As he talks about them, he cuddles them with his fingers. He likes the braided material that is 'soft like a glove', the shape that is pointy but not too much, and the elastic that is placed exactly where it feels most comfortable. He has been looking for a replacement for many years, but can't afford the same quality today as he could when he bought these shoes; this is something that he regrets.



Jacob's favourite shoes

When he talks about this pair of shoes, he gets very passionate, just like as he did he talked about the colour black. The same is the case when he shows me his braces and bowtie in light pink, his party uniform with his uncle's ambulance cap, his white gloves, a coated denim jacket with a Nehru collar, and his black trousers, or his space suit and matching cap from an astronaut course that he took at a space academy in the United States. The blue space suit is packed away, but he shows me the cap.

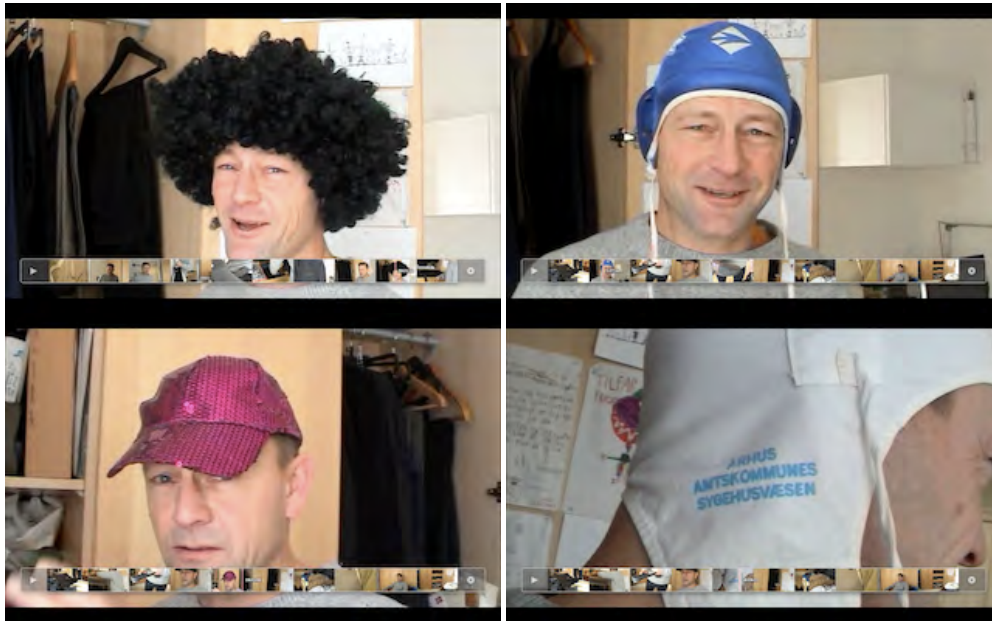


Jacob's space academy cap (left) and (right) his braces and bowtie in light pink, with a dotted pattern.

When Jacob is evidently feeling at his happiest, he starts to talk about the many hats that he wears for parties: his Afro wig, his swimming cap, his cap with pink sequins, and his hat from a hospital that is normally used for brain surgery. When we talk about the Afro wig, Jacob says:

**Then you can do something out of the ordinary. I don't drink particularly much, I have fun in myself.**





Above: Jacob's Afro wig, and his swimming cap. Below: his pink sequined cap and his brain surgery hat from a hospital.

*Summary: Jake the Fake and other aliases like 'The Disco Kid'*

Through his wardrobe, I am introduced to many facets of Jacob that have been developed through many types of jobs, in many different places in the world. One of the more colourful versions of Jacob is *Jake the Fake*, a name he was given at the space academy in the United States, 'because I was so full of baloney'. It would be obvious to claim that Jacob is something like a chameleon at work, and that he retains some inner, authentic version of Jacob for his private sphere. However, to my mind, this would be too simplistic. What I meet here is a man who grew up with work uniforms as a natural part of life. He tells me that his father did the same: went to work in certain ensembles, and then came home and changed for dinner. From his family, he knows about the dressing etiquettes of the upper classes, and in general he is very meticulous about how he maintains and styles his outfits and dress objects, so that he gets the right appearance. He says that 'I can enter all social circles I would like to, and this is fun because I meet a lot of interesting people'. Perhaps this is why the word 'uniforms' turns up in relation to so many of his outfits for work. He finds that 'fashion is a lot of things, and I have tried to find a middle road - and then I get just as boring as everyone else'. But actually, it is this ability to look boring that gives him the opportunity to move more freely between social environments and different types of work.

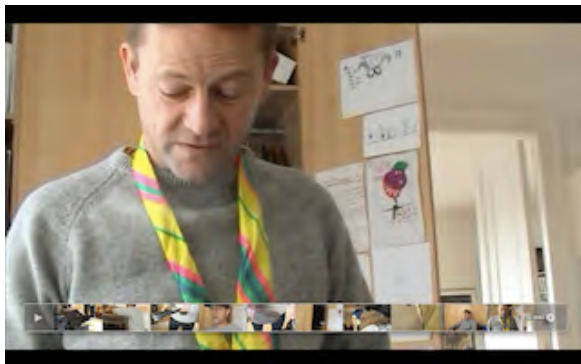
At the end of the session, we sit and talk a lot about his family, and talk about how he learned to iron his shirts and wear all the formal, dressy outfits, but also how he had a love, very early on, for the extraordinary. And how he loved moving to New York, because

**In New York, you can wear anything. I wore turquoise shoes and they didn't match my style, and my boss asked me what the hell I was wearing. I loved those shoes!**

He also says that

**It's all about being a village idiot. If you're not, what do you get out of life?**

After we have worked our way through his wardrobe, and the session is about to end, he finds the first dress object that he ever purchased with his own money, when he was only 13 or 14 years old. It's a ladies' tie, in very bright colours, and just like when he talked about his favourite shoes, the atmosphere in the room suddenly becomes very intimate, as he is cuddling the tie with his hands. The tie was bought for his own pocket money in a shop in central Copenhagen. Even if Jacob is a man of many colours and disguises, there is this 'red thread' of adventure and sparkle, combined with old-fashioned etiquette and ideas about quality running through his wardrobe biography.



Jacob's ladies' tie, the first dress object he ever purchased himself

### *In the showroom at Nørgaard*

Jacob had looked very thoroughly at the collection, and at the campaign material. The result of this is that he was very focused when he arrived, and that he more or less knew what he wanted. Now he wanted to try it on, and to look at himself in the mirror, to make the final decision. He tried on the 'Kenneth Lambswool' style, a light grey sweater

with a round neck and black elbow patches that really appealed to him. He also looked at a pink shirt, but didn't choose this one because 'I am not allowed, by my wife, to wear pink'. Finally, he chose the style, 'Klemens Zip Kontrast Style', the grey sailor sweater with an orange zipper, which Michael had looked at as well. He also chose the 'Brother Sateen Style no. 30092' style, a grey smoking blazer with black satin lapels. When he looked in the mirror, he pulled up the lapel in the back. He found that it looked cooler this way.

However, he found that the sleeves were too long. At that point in the session, there was a offer extended to him to have the sleeves altered at the design studio.



Jacob looked at this pink shirt, and at this light grey sweater, but chose instead a grey sailor sweater with an orange zipper, and a grey smoking jacket with black satin lapels.

### *Second session*

When we met again, I brought printouts of the probes to Jacobs's apartment. At first, we discussed the photos, back and forth. But then, when we started to talk about the smoking jacket, Jacob starts bringing in other jackets as well, to show me how they all look when he wears them. Jacob has been very pleased with both the sweater and the smoking jacket, and he claims that he has used both objects frequently. Actually, he says that on the average, he believes he has used the sweater once a week. Still, most of the probes that he sent me during the 5 month period were taken when he was on a holiday in New York with his family, so these are what we discuss the most. For the most part, he has combined the sweater with T-shirts or a shirt. On one of the photos, he is at a family party just around the time of Christmas. He smiles and says that here, the sweater 'is a little tight around the belly', because he had gained a little weight. But still, he was pleased with this ensemble. Another ensemble including the sweater is a combination



with a black shirt, black jeans, and black dress shoes. He wore this when he went to visit his former workplace in New York. He also used this ensemble combined with black, dressy trousers for being at the airport, because he wanted to look stylish when travelling.

Jacob tells me several times that he has really used the sweater a lot. He has also met other men wearing a similar one, perhaps even with a different coloured zipper, and he likes that they have been discussing their sweaters - just like people who drive a Volkswagen who greet each other when they meet. He has washed it two times and followed the washing instructions very carefully. Afterwards he ironed it, because it said on the instructions that this was okay. However, this treatment caused the wool to lose its shape, which is very unfortunate. Jacob had not noticed this himself, but when his daughter took a photo of him in New York, she told him that it gave him 'male boobs'. This is because the knit tightens right underneath the bubble pattern, while it has become very loose on the chest, so that it looks as if he is wearing a bra. He has worn it a lot with the zipper half closed, because he found that it gave him a more masculine shape, but he can now only wear it when it is open. And here, the problem is that the inner coating behind the zipper flaps out and twists: it doesn't stay in place. Still Jacob believes that it must be a matter of ironing and styling, that he might still be able to wear it if he wears it in the right way. To me, it looks like it is worn out and will soon become a passive object in his wardrobe, until it is eventually discarded.



Jacob wearing his sailor sweater from Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen. From left to right: at a family party; on the street in New York (where his daughter quips that he has 'male boobs'); at the airport.

Jacob is really, really pleased with his smoking jacket, and finds it almost as good as a tailor-made jacket. He has used it a lot for special events such as partying, combining the jacket with trainers and a T-shirt so that it looks 'a little more cool and sporty'. He is very pleased with the alterations that were made at the Nørgaard design studio. It doesn't show on the probes, but he has worn it mostly with the collar pulled up, even if his family dislikes this. Jacob believes that pulling up the collar gives him a little more of a T-shape, and tells me that actually, you can buy tailored jackets with this functionality implemented in the construction. In a way that is typical for Jacob, he knows about such tailoring details, and tries to implement this function in his new jacket. On the probes, there are various ensembles, and he is particularly fond of his New Year ensemble with a white shirt, black jeans, heavy black belt and black dress shoes. On a day trip in New York, he wore the same ensemble, only with a new black T-shirt with a white print. At a bar in New York, he wears a sportier ensemble, with the combination of a white shirt, a grey sweatshirt ('new, so that it stayed in shape'), and black and white trainers.



Jacob wearing his Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen smoking jacket on New Year's Eve 2011 and again at a bar in New York City.

To show me what he means, he pulls out some of the other jackets from his wardrobe, and puts them on. With the collar up, he feels more 'young and cool' in his Mads Nørgaard smoking. However, at a later point in time he writes to me that he unfortunately got some stains on the jacket by accident, and has not been able to clean them from the fabric, why the jacket has now gone out of use.



Jacob shows me his Mads Nørgaard smoking jacket with the collar pulled up. Some months after this, he sends me a photo of the stains that subsequently ruined the jacket.

## Pelle

Pelle is 42 years old, and lives in an apartment in Copenhagen with his wife. He has two teenage children from an earlier marriage that live there part-time as well. Pelle runs a successful communication agency together with a partner. So he is a very busy man. Because of his working hours, I arrive early one evening at the apartment, where he offers me coffee from a very fancy coffee machine in his kitchen before we start. Pelle shares a wall-to-wall wardrobe closet with his wife, an old-fashioned built-in wardrobe that is commensurate with the relatively luxurious apartment in one of Copenhagen's more affluent neighbourhoods. In a double cabinet, he stores shirts, suits, blazers and ties. In a single cabinet with drawers he has a drawer for knitwear, a drawer for T-shirts and hoodies, and a drawer for trousers and sweatpants.

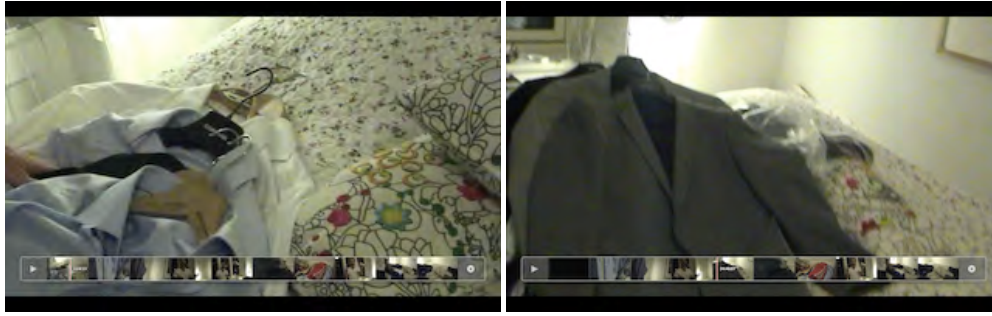
Pelle tells me that, for many years, he stored a lot in his wardrobe, but that throughout the latter years, he has made some serious revisions. First of all, he moved because he got divorced from his ex-wife. Then he met his current wife, and he had to make space in the wardrobe closet for her. After one year with her, he had started running and doing a lot of exercise, and had lost so much weight that he had to let go of a lot that was too big for him. By that time, he had lost 15 kilogrammes. He said that in this revision, he still kept a lot of objects from his past, because he couldn't let go of them. But then he lost more weight, 7 kilogrammes more, and had to revise his wardrobe once again, and then most of these things were finally discarded. These days, he takes part in Iron Man contests all over the world in his spare time. All this means that Pelle has very few older objects in his wardrobe, aside from his shoe collection, because as he tells me, he still uses the same shoe size. Just like Jacob, Pelle distinguishes quite rigidly between dressing for work and dressing for his private life, although some objects can work for both. As is the case with both Michael and Jacob, Pelle is also very aware of matching his various clients with what he wears. Unlike Jacob, however, Pelle does not seem to know about dressing etiquettes for dressy formalwear from his childhood. This is something he learned himself when he started working, because he had to. What I register in particular as we talk our way through his wardrobe is how his outfits for work and leisure time differ in their respective colour palettes. His workwear is mostly in light, delicate blue colours, navy blue, white, or black. Only single objects such as a pair of

chinos are in light brown. His private wardrobe is more colourful, in particular his homewear. Here, I see bright reds, bright greens, prints, and T-shirts with statements and colourful prints. I also register his fancy for displaying his new and fit body through wearing tight-fitting objects, and for very soft materials as in some of his knitwear, and his sweatpants and hoodies that he wears at home. Pelle starts by talking about his shirts, and then moves on to the ties, suits and blazers. Then follow the trousers, the sweatpants, the hoodies and knitwear, the T-shirts, and finally the shoes.

### *'Hardcore' versus 'softcore'*

Pelle's wardrobe for work is divided into a hierarchy between what he calls 'hardcore' and 'softcore'. Each of these categories is defined – and explained – by heaps of shirts that he takes out and places on his bed. He wears shirts almost every day at work, and often changes into T-shirts when he gets home. Therefore, his shirts are a very important part of his ensembles for work. Like both Michael and Jacob, Pelle is very aware of how to match various clients, and how his appearance can strengthen his position in relation to competitors. Like Jacob, he has a hierarchy of various objects that he can combine in order to adjust his appearance.

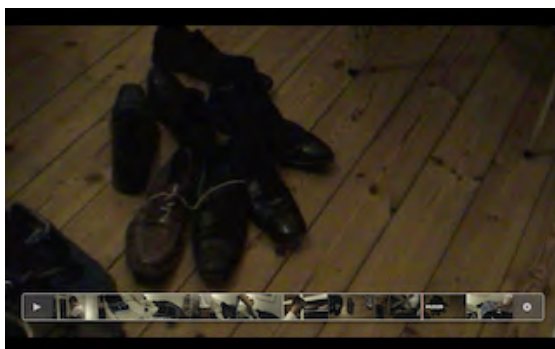
At the top of the work hierarchy is what he calls 'hardcore', which he wears on rare occasions. This is what he wears when, for example, he works with his top clients. Like Jacob, he uses white shirts of the Eton brand for such types of work. In his most formal ensembles, he uses white Eton shirts that are cut so as to accommodate cufflinks, and combines these with his Hugo Boss suits, one of his green silk ties, and shoes with a hard heel. He only wears suits of the Hugo Boss brand. He tells me he has tried a queue of other brands that were really disappointing to him, especially two suits of the Armani that brand were very costly but nonetheless wore out quickly, when the lining broke around the stitches after only a few times of use. The two Hugo Boss suits are some of the few dress objects that have survived his wardrobe revisions. This is because he had them altered by a tailor so that they would match his new body size. Actually, he finds that they became even better after this, because they fit his body perfectly now.



From left to right, Pelle's Eton shirts in his heap with dressy formal shirts, and his two Hugo Boss suits

Pelle is the first of the informants so far to mention the importance of *sound* in what he wears, and this comes forth as we talk about the shoes that he would wear for these outfits. He would never wear shoes with a soft sole for a 'hardcore' ensemble. We talk about this as he shows me a pair of black goatskin loafers that he bought in Rome, and never wears. He liked them at the time of the purchase, but when he got home he found them to be too 'Italian'. At several moments during the session, he would mention Italian menswear as a reference point. For example, he tells me how Italian men have made it more mainstream to wear brown shoes and belts, and pink shirts, and how this has opened up room for Nordic men like himself to be more daring. However, there are limitations: when he wore his loafers to work one day, he got bullied by his colleagues, so he has never done this again. When I ask more about what is wrong with them, he says that they are too 'effeminate'. To show me what he means by this, he takes up a pair of shoes with a hard heel, which he uses for his 'hardcore' ensembles. As we talk about it, he says.

**At the top of the power scale there are these ones, they are just 'rrrrong', so cool, and not at all effeminate. There's some kind of design and something youthful about them, and then they are a little more 'rrrrong' (claps with the hand on the heel so that it makes a sound). It's something quite masculine: that others can hear you. (He takes up another pair and claps the heels together so that they make a clacking noise) The same counts for these ones. This category is for suits and work.**



Pelle has made a heap with all of his shoes with hard heels, which he can use for his 'hardcore' ensembles.

Pelle would never change his ensemble during the day. As Jacob did, he tells me that he would select what to wear for a given work day according to the 'highest level'. Pelle is very aware of how he can work with his appearance. And that, actually, he is not dressing to match, but rather to 'overmatch':

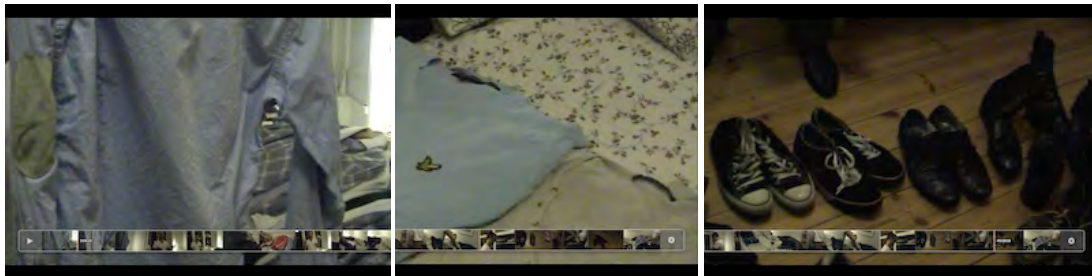
**I will match the top guys in the company who have a substantial power. I mirror this power in what I wear. When I am in smaller companies, the top guys don't dress up as much, and I will match this as well. If I am in a smaller company, I dress up so that I look like a guy who knows stuff. I show them that here is someone with experience. Like today, when I was facilitating a conference, then I wore a suit to underline that I know what I'm doing.**

All together, the 'hardcore' ensembles aid Pelle in positioning himself at work, but he only uses them for specific workdays. On other days, he wears shirts and matching ensembles in the category that he calls 'ordinary business'. These shirts are blue or black, and he combines them with jeans or chinos, and a blazer. He owns two grey wool blazers from Hugo Boss that he uses for this category. For this, he mostly wears shoes with a hard heel, but might consider wearing dressy shoes with a softer heel as well. This category is for what he calls 'ordinary meetings'.

The third heap he calls 'casual', and these shirts could be a designer shirt such as one of the Paul Smith brand, or they could be the ones that he bought in Rome, with discrete check-patterns. The overall colour palette is blue, white and grey, possibly black, though he actually doesn't use the black ones that much. It is in this heap that he finds his favourite shirt, a light blue one. It has discrete designer details such as stripes in delicate light yellow and white on the inner coating behind the buttons, and elbow patches in delicate light yellow. The cut is slimline, which he finds is nice-looking. These ones can cross the line between casual business meetings, and meeting up with friends. The same goes for a similar shirt, in the same colour, of the Franklin and Marshall brand. He calls these 'cool all-round shirts'. These outfits are combined with shoes with a soft heel, possibly his Converse boots, or a pair of designer sneakers with leopard print inside, colour details on the laces, and made out of navy blue suede skin. Or with one of his most used articles of footwear: a pair of black ankle boots with elastic bands in the side, and hard heels. The 'casual' category is also where he uses a lot of knitwear, such as his two similar light blue V-neck pullovers of the Lyle & Scott brand, which he wears over a T-shirt. These are some of his favourite dress objects. The same goes for a beige pullover of the Danish brand, Day Birger et Mikkelsen, with an impressively large V-neck neck opening, and shiny buttons made out of mother-of-pearl. This one, however, is not appropriate for wearing to work, and this is because of the neck opening. He tells me



this it would make him feel 'too much in focus'. His most favourite knitwear object is his navy blue sailor sweater with a metal zipper from Mads Nørgaard. This is used for most purposes, from 'ordinary business' to 'casual', to leisure time. He is very specific and clear when he tells me that he never washes it, and that this is why it retains its shape and colour. Instead, he airs it. The same goes for jeans in this category. His favourite ones that he wears during the session are of the Japanese brand, Edwin, and they have never been washed. Pelle does this because he has been advised to refrain from doing so by his 'jeans pusher', a local shop owner where he bought them. He appreciates a shop like this, where he gets special advice related to treatment, maintenance, and use of the articles of clothing. He also appreciates how the brands sold in this shop are exclusive, and are not known by everybody.



From left to right: Pelle's favourite shirt, with designer details and the preferred slim-line cut; his Lyle & Scott pullovers next to his pullover from Day Birger & Mikkelsen; and his shoes, with soft heels that he uses for the 'casual' category.

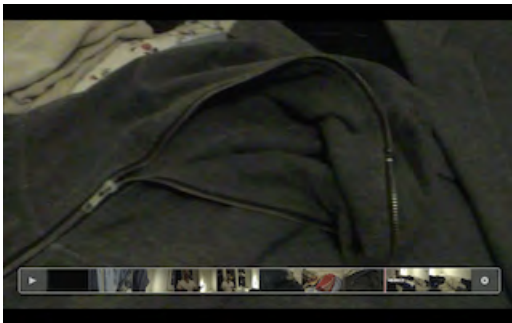
This category has an altogether softer expression in comparison with the first two, and when it comes to to work, he uses these ensembles for events like meetings with clients from the public sector, and for office days. As we talk our way through this category, I ask him specifically about his job as a consultant, and he has this to say:

**I think that in the business of communication we have a large scope for dressing. But we also face the challenge that if people are thinking that we are these creative guys, they might get disappointed when I turn up in my Hugo Boss suit. Because this is not what they expected, they might have expected a funny T-shirt, or a pair of Converse boots. My appearance is about generating the right expectations.**

While he finds it easy to navigate himself, he tells me that actually, there are workdays where there are very exact dress codes in force. And this is where the category of 'casual' business really starts to cross over with his off-work wardrobe. For example, he tells me that a few months before the session, he managed a four-day course in the United States for an important client. Here, every one of the participants received a list of dress codes for each event, replete with full descriptions distinguishing between, for example, 'casual', 'smart casual', and 'sporty casual'. For each category, certain examples



of dress objects were specified, 'because everyone wanted to avoid sticking out from the rest'. It is in this same line of workdays that Pelle can wear some of his own private wardrobe: for travelling and for less formal social events with clients. This goes for two hoodies with designer details, such as a grey one in jersey fabric with a zipper in the front that runs from the waistline and to the top of the hood. Or one of his favourites, a navy blue cardigan with an emblem-like yellow applique on the chest. He finds the latter to be a little more appropriate for work, because everyone can tell that it is of the Ralph Lauren brand.



Where dress for leisure time crosses with work time: Pelle's grey jersey hoodie with designer details like the zipper, which he wears for specific occasions at work

In this way, there is a very stringent classification system that guides the way Pelle dresses for work. This classification system is based on colour palette, material considerations like 'hard' versus 'soft' materials, the covering-up of skin (i.e. no large neck openings in the pullovers), and considerations about how to match expectations of looking like a 'Danish' man, even if Pelle himself is attracted to a more 'Italian' way of dressing (softer materials, colours that are associated with femininity). These parameters are not necessarily connected with the general etiquette for formalwear, but more with Pelle's personal taste patterns.

### *Conditional colour palette*

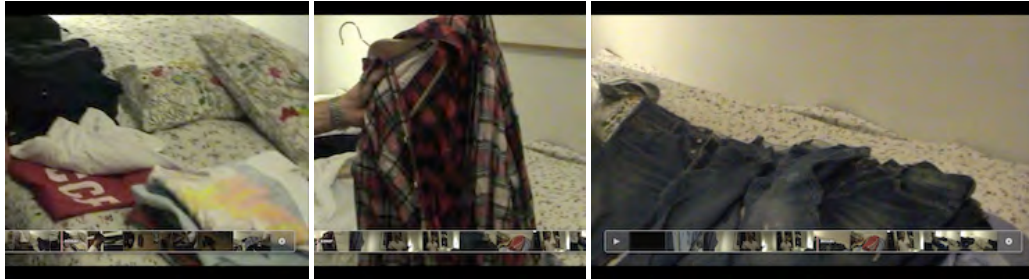
As soon as we move into Pelle's wardrobe for off-work, the materials that he prefers get even softer, and the colour palette gets more colourful. Here, what also becomes visible is that he has a marked taste for American sportswear. As we talk about this in relation to a navy blue Lyle and Scott cardigan, Pelle says:

**There's something about this college style, the sporty look, that I like. I like references to that, like a small logo or something. It doesn't need to be Lacoste, something that everybody knows, but it has to be high quality. And recognisable, for those in the know.**

As Pelle makes clear in this quote, he is very much into a sporty-casual style in his private life, and he is also very much into exclusive designer brands. He has mentioned this as well in relation to his jeans, but as we start talking about his T-shirts, he unfurls a long monologue about the Paul Smith brand. Several of his most favourite T-shirts are of this brand, and they are characterised by a sophisticated use of colour and print, often with humoristic motives. He tells me how he experienced being one of the first Danish men to wear this brand, along with a colleague, and how the two men enjoyed wearing something special: like a secret brand. However, as it came to be sold in Denmark and came to be more and more mainstream, he wasn't wearing it as much. This taste for dress objects that are exclusive and 'not for everybody' is recapitulated in his selection of jeans, which are all middle to expensive in price, and which all have designer details like extra pockets, decorative stitches, and extra patches on the knees.

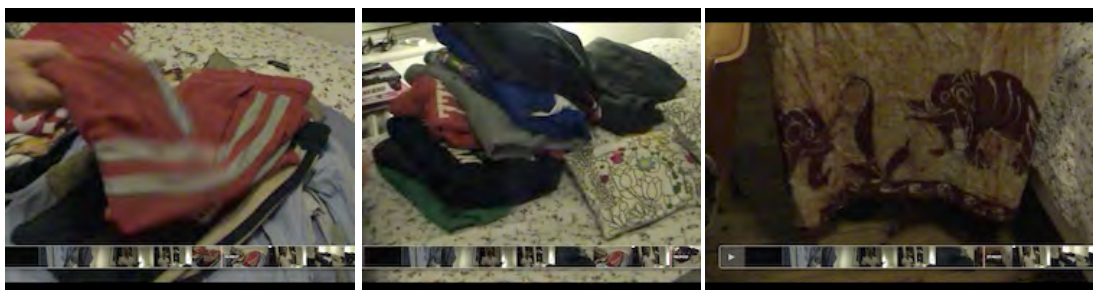
As for his shoes, he has a wide range of trainers that are mostly of the same shape and colour palette - a style of trainers that harks back to the 1980s, when he grew up. This is something I notice, even if he doesn't make any mention of it. However, it is certainly characteristic. These are of the Reebok or Nike brands. Underneath his shirts, or simply combined with jeans, he will often wear a white or black T-shirt, in a 'good quality from the brands JBS, Ralph Lauren or BAS'. He also has some polo shirts that are rather tight-fitting. He tells me that before he lost weight, he could never wear a shirt with pockets on the chest, because 'when I was bigger, this was not exactly the place on my body that I wished to have thrown into relief. Now, he wears lots of slimline fit shirts and T-shirts.

While discussing this category, Pelle mentions a number of times that this or that objects are perfect for wearing on 'a trip to a forest with the kids, during weekends'. This is particularly noticeable when we are talking about his red, black and white flannel lumberjack shirt, and his jeans. But other objects are also mentioned as working well for these purposes. As it turns out, he makes this kind of excursion quite rarely, but kind of likes the idea that he could do so if he wanted to. After this, we both start laughing every time he starts to speak about objects that are good for 'a trip to the forest'.



What Pelle wears on weekends, or on 'trips to the forest with the kids': designer T-shirts; a lumberjack shirt in flannel; designer jeans, and blue and white trainers.

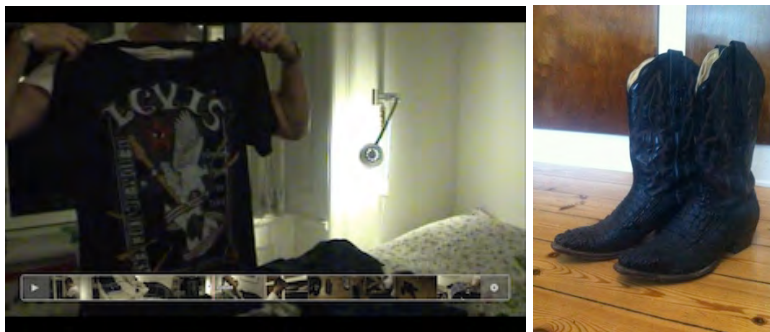
What Pelle actually does partake of a lot in his private life is *sports*, which he also does together with his wife. He tells me that his sports wardrobe is tremendous. So vast that much of it is stored in the basement. He also has three large sports bags in the wardrobe closet, under the hangers. But we never get to look inside, and Pelle is quite reluctant when it comes to this issue. Mostly, it seems, because this part of his wardrobe is completely separated from the rest. What we discuss, instead, is what he wears when he gets home from work, or when he gets home from doing sports. Pelle is also quite picky when it comes to these objects. All of these objects, such as hoodies and sweatpants, have rather bright colours, and the material seems to be very thick and soft. So it is not at all surprising that it is from this category that he takes out one of the rare older objects in his wardrobe: a tie-dyed sarong with elephants printed on a yellow-white background. This is an object that he purchased more than 20 years ago on a holiday trip to Sri Lanka. Now he wears it only when he wants to sit on his bed under the duvet in the evening reading a book, and he always wears it without wearing underwear. However, this can only happen when his children are not staying over, because they hate it. Especially his daughter, who has absolutely forbidden him to wear it when she has friends over.



What Pelle wears when he relaxes in private: sweatpants and hoodies in thick, soft cotton blends; and even sometimes his 20+ year old sarong from Sri Lanka, which his teenage daughter finds to be extremely embarrassing.

Some of the same soft and relaxed expression can be found in his white ensemble made out of linen, which is actually too large for him now, but which he nonetheless chose to wear at his wedding the summer before the session. The shirt is actually like an Arab kirtle, with a V-neck, and is quite long. The trousers are light summer trousers with a lot of width in the trousers legs. For this, he wore the light brown Italian slippers in braided goatskin.

Also in this category, there are dress objects that 'stick out' from the rest, according to Pelle. This can be said, for example, of a T-shirt of the Levis brand, with very colourful prints, and of his cowboy boots that are made of alligator skin. These objects are used only under very restricted circumstances, once or twice a year. What is 'wrong' about these objects seems to be that they are too flamboyant. Still, he is very happy about his boots and his T-shirt, and has continued to wear this ensemble for years, on selected occasions, of course.



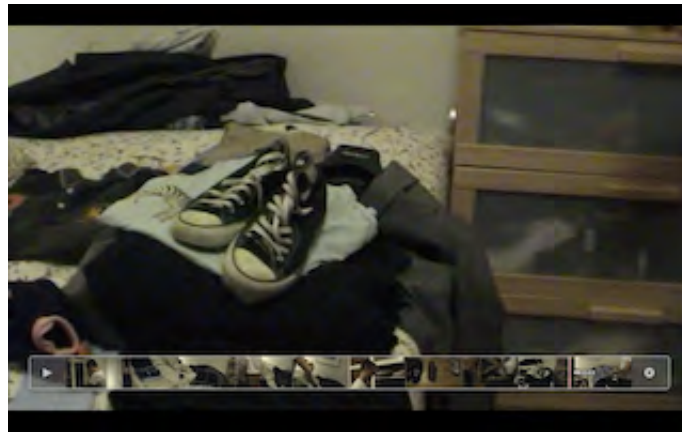
What Pelle wears once or twice a year when going to concerts or boxing matches, and when he travels to Jutland with a friend: a Levis T-shirt with a colourful print, and his alligator skin cowboy boots. He combines these articles with jeans.

Even if Pelle owns these few objects that stick out, I regard his private wardrobe in the category of 'off-work' as generally being very 'soft' looking, in terms of the materials, the soles on the shoes, the fit, and the sizes. Even at his wedding, he chose not to look formal and dress up in his 'hardcore' business look but, quite the contrary, to dress in some of the softest dress objects he owns: objects that he would *never* wear to work.

### *Summation*

All in all, Pelle's wardrobe displays a large span between 'hardcore', 'softcore', 'casual' and 'off work'. There are very rigid divisions between the categories, and typically it is

the objects that cross the line between formal and casual that he appreciates the most. During Pelle's session, we came up with the idea of making a heap of 'all-timers' objects, objects that expressed 'where the heart is'. This was not planned beforehand, but as our session went on, we could talk back and forth about – and move around between – new objects that he took out, and discuss and construct 'the heap'. What he placed here is what he perceives at the ultimate wardrobe, because here he would have everything he needs. It is 'my style'. It is 'my colours'. There is 'the American sporty thing' here, and the objects are 'perhaps, quite designer-like'. When I ask him what he would have used from this heap 10 years ago, he mentions the Mads Nørgaard sailor sweater. He believes that he would have used it back then had he had owned it, and he says that he will be using it in 10 years time as well.



Pelle's heap of 'all-timers' favourite dress objects: his grey, woollen blazer from Hugo Boss, his Edwin jeans from his jeans pusher, his Converse boots, his Mads Nørgaard sailor sweater, his Ralph Lauren cardigan, and his Paul Smith T-shirt – with a print of two flamingos and a speech bubble saying, "new socks?".

### *In the showroom at Nørgaard*

Pelle arrived, and as the only one the informants to be doing so, he was already wearing dress objects from Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen. This, he claimed, was not because of the nature of the session, but because this was what he was often wearing at the time. He wore his favourite navy blue sailor sweater with metal zipper, and a large knitted scarf in blue and white stripes. As Pelle stepped into the showroom, the Mads Nørgaard staff commented that Pelle was 'a real Nørgaard kind of guy'. And actually, Pelle was the one who had the most difficulties choosing what to take home, because he liked so much of the collection. Pelle looked at the style 'Classic Serge Sky-Stripe', a light blue collarless shirt with stripes, that he found to be 'too much a night shirt'. He also looked at the style, 'Classic Svante-Sky Stripe', a more business-looking shirt with blue stripes that he found

to be 'really nice'. He also looked shortly at the 'Praise Tiamo' style: a pair of khaki-coloured chinos. He looked at three knitwear objects: a light blue pullover with a rounded neckline, that he found 'too hippie-like', the 'Kenneth Lambswool' style, a light grey pullover with a round neck that he liked, but 'not [suitable] for work'; and the 'Kanol Lambswool' style, a blue V-neck pullover which was 'better for work', although he didn't choose this one, either. He ended up choosing the 'Klemens Zip' style, a grey sailor sweater with a metal zipper, 'that I can use while the other are being aired', and the 'Star Cotton Rib' style, a light grey jersey hoodie, which would be come in handy 'for flight trips'.



Pelle looked at these styles, but finally settle on a light grey sailor sweater with a metal zipper, and a light grey jersey hoodie.

### *Second session*

On the telephone, Pelle and I discuss his photos, as we are both looking at them. Pelle tells me that he is wearing his grey sweater more and more, and that it is currently in the top three in his wardrobe. This is because he has found that, actually, it is more appropriate and more usable for work than the blue one he already had. On the probes that he has sent me, there is one ensemble for work, where he combines the grey sweater with his favourite light blue Frankell & Marshall shirt, and his khaki coloured chinos. In the other ensemble, he has combined it with his favourite jeans, and his red, black and white lumberjack shirt. This ensemble is 'for trips to the forest', as he says – with a grin. On top of this, he tells me that he has enjoyed wearing the sweater at his office during the winter, because it gets quite cold, and also that he has used it a lot for weekends, or on trips with his family.





Pelle wearing his Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen sweater in two ensembles: the one on the left is for off-work, while the one on the right is for wearing at work.

Like the blue sweater, he has never washed his new grey one, and only aired it. He is very surprised how well it has stayed in shape, and is very enthusiastic about this. He thinks that the sales people in the Mads Nørgaard shop should tell people not to wash these sweaters. He mentions how this is just what he likes with his jeans pusher, that the sales guy makes a big deal out of advising people not to wash their jeans. He believes that the sweater is 'in a league of its own', and should be sold as such, just like expensive damask tablecloths that are sold by sales people who provide customers with special instructions about maintaining these articles, so that they can last a lifetime.



Pelle wearing his light grey jersey hoodie from Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen in two different off-work ensembles.

On the other hand, Pelle is not this enthusiastic about the grey hoodie, which he has used off-work, or on travels. On the probes, he has combined it with jeans, and

alternatively with shorts. He is annoyed because the rib started to go out of shape very quickly, and also because it is not quite warm enough for flying. Therefore it has been facing stiff competition from his fleece hoodie. Apparently, the grey hoodie does not live up to Pelle's demands for warmth and softness, nor does it live up to his taste for the exclusive.

### *Chameleons at work*

After conducting the wardrobe sessions with the three men, I am not at all surprised about how they made their choices in the showroom at Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen. Michael, as he is in his own wardrobe, is highly occupied with colours and graphic expression. He is undergoing a transitional phase where he wears a lot of blue, and is attracted to a new type of colour palette that deviates from the brown DDR/retro palette of brown and green. So I am not surprised to see that he chooses a blue cardigan and a bright red sweater. Jacob is into tailoring and is very confident about what he wants, but also needs to navigate between what he likes to wear and what his wife likes him to wear. For this reason, he passes on the pink shirt, and chooses instead the grey sailor sweater with a neon zipper, and a stylish smoking jacket. He is not currently undergoing any transitional phase. Neither is Pelle, who only looks at styles that resemble what he already wears.

When these three men talk about their wardrobes, what strikes me is that they all have somewhat fixed 'solutions' to their respective dressing dilemmas, that they, as Michael refers to it, are all 'serial monogamists' when it comes to dressing. All three wardrobes are managed through a set of rules and criteria whereby they navigate between various events and daily routines. As I could see also in the wardrobes of Torben and Jonas, these men are all quite conscious about dressing appropriately. And by establishing various hierarchies between what they like the most and what is more passive, they make the daily process of dressing easier and less time-consuming. My informants are all very conscious about how they manage various codes for various purposes. Consider Michael, who talks about how he needs to be dressed according to his clients' expectations when it comes to how creative people dress, and that he can navigate through his various jobs by adjusting his ensembles. This is largely because Michael needs to look more or less the same for all of his clients, only with smaller adjustments. The same is not the case, though, with Jacob or with Pelle, both of whom need to manage very carefully how they dress according to the day's schedule. Nearly every day, they



both need to think about what types of meetings and tasks are on the schedule, and then adjust their appearance accordingly. In the case of Pelle, he speaks about how his strategy is to 'overmatch', in order to make his position clear to his colleagues and clients. Therefore, he dresses for the most powerful clients that he will be meeting during the day's programme. Jacob's strategy seems to be to blend in: he speaks about how he 'changes skin' when he goes to work, and then he has a whole line of ensembles that he only wears for his private life. When they speak about these things, they use words like 'business', 'soft', 'casual', and 'sporty', that are not always so precise, but through which they categorize, for example, their shirts. Shirts in particular seem to be the nexus where they can shift from one code to another, according to the daily schedule, and it is on the basis of various shirt categories that they have more or less fixed ensembles.

Whereas their use of various codes has a great deal to do with outer expectations, particular in relation to work, another issue is how they make these codes fit into their individual taste patterns. Here, I found that like Torben and Jonas, the new set of informants have also been developing their taste for particular design elements like colour palettes, fabric textures, and shapes over a long period of time, which casts lines going back to their early adolescence. These elements are, at times, connected to styles that have been worn in particular environments, as can be seen in the case of Pelle, who attended Roskilde University and dressed like his fellow students. Or Jacob who, through his upbringing and his career in the shipping industry, has developed a knowledge and a taste for tailoring details. The taste patterns could also be said to belong to youthful trends such as the revival of the 1970s in the mid- and late- 1990s, which inspired a lot of young people to shop in the 2Hand dress, furniture and music shops that belonged to this decade. This was certainly the case with Michael, who as he said 'went with the current'. However, the elements could also belong to styles that appear to descend from highly individualised ideas about style, as can be seen with Michael, who wore his 'DDR style' for more than a decade, or in the case of Jacob, who goes out partying dressed in space suits, or weird wigs and hats, because he finds a sense of relief in looking like a 'village idiot'. When we discuss sensory aspects of their wardrobes, I find it very interesting that they evidently re-enact ideas about masculinity and femininity through what they wear. Pelle is the one who addresses this most explicitly, when he talks about how shoes with a hard heel are more masculine than loafers made out of soft skin, and when he reports that his pullover from Day Birger and Mikkelsen is too soft in the material, and has too wide a neck opening to be part of his

work wardrobe. When we touch on the issue of attractiveness, Jacob and Pelle are perfectly aware of wearing objects that give them a T-shaped body, which they find to be most attractive and nice-looking. Michael also speaks about how his long-sleeved, tight-fitting T-shirts make his upper body look nice. And when he plays concerts with his band, he exposes his uncovered shoulders by wearing a low-cut sweatshirt. Finally, also like Torben and Jonas, the three men all have very fixed ideas about what kinds of silhouettes they like to wear, and what kinds of textures they like, although even if the same shapes and textures are repeated over and over throughout their wardrobes, this is an issue they are not quite as aware of as they are of other decisive parameters. However, when they compare active dress objects with more passive ones, these parameters come forth as being highly decisive with respect to what they actually wear. Looking at their wardrobes from the outside, it becomes very clear that what they are storing is not there by accident, but rather a consequence of the fact that they certainly have distinct sets of visual and sensory criteria through which all they wear is being filtered.

#### *Final summation*

After the 5-month period of probing, the dress objects from Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen were fully appropriated and integrated into the wardrobes of my informants. This means these objects, at this point, were being judged on the basis of individual criteria according to which the three men solve their daily dressing dilemmas, and form their preferences. What I found was that there is a red thread that integrates everything they wear, including the dress objects from Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen, a red thread that has to do with how they see themselves as men, as husbands, as friends and as working professionals. Still it seems that they all have some basic points of departure that they keep repeating. Should they change more dramatically, this could be due to a considerable weight loss, such as in Pelle's case, or due to a very insistent partner like Michael's girlfriend, who disliked his style and is trying to change it. The way that the men dress is closely connected with their feeling of self, and it is on this basis that the new dress objects are selected or de-selected, and subsequently moved around in the wardrobe hierarchy.

The informants established feelings of ownership with respect to the Mads Nørgaard design in different ways, but they did so through adapting and appropriating the new dress objects into their respective wardrobes, so that they would match the set of

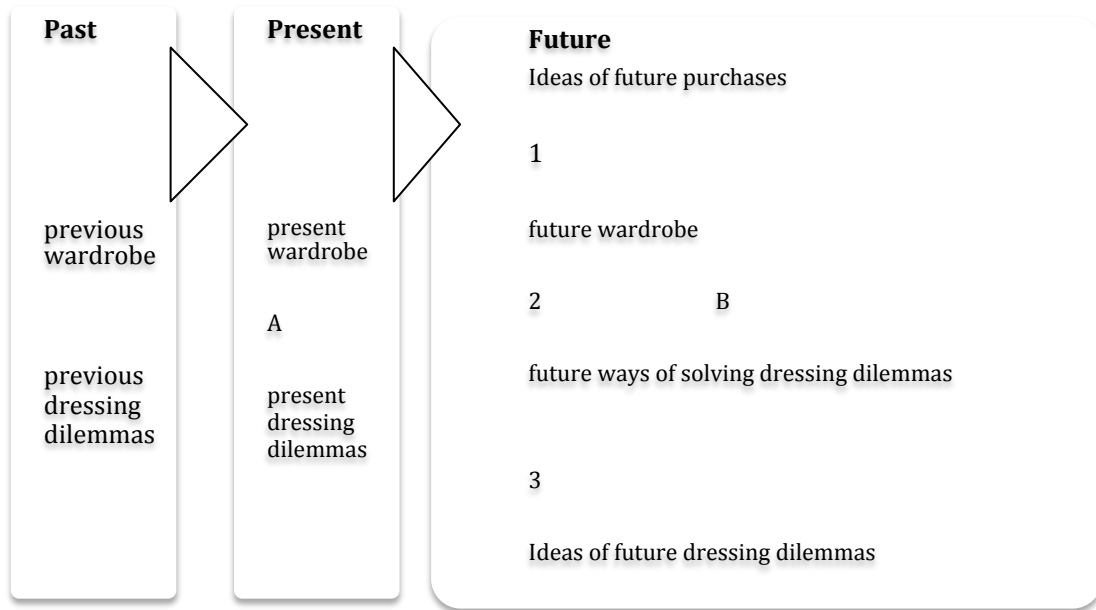
individual 'rules' for how to dress. Pelle air-dried his sailor sweater, because this is a ritual with which he places certain dress objects particularly high in his wardrobe hierarchy. Jacob had his smoking jacket altered by the Mads Nørgaard-Copenhagen design studio, because he was sure that he would appreciate the item more if the length of the arms were adjusted to the correct dimensions, and this made it particularly valued, because it felt like the item was made for him. Michael made his dress objects part of 'fixed ensembles', and in this way, he used them frequently. On the other hand, Pelle's hoodie and Jacob's sailor sweater became passive objects, because they were washed out of shape. And Michael's red sailor sweater has become passive because it spends a lot of time in the laundry bin, waiting for a wool wash, and because it does not match completely the new colour he has been looking for in his transitional phase.

### **Concluding chapter; dialogue and epilogue**

I started out by asking how Mads Nørgaard's idea of 'favourites' is appropriated and filtered through my informants' own idea of 'favourites' in their wardrobes. And how such a view might contribute with perspectives on practices in the fashion industry in general, and on the Nørgaard brand in particular. In order to do so, I elaborated on Klepp's concept of 'favourites' that runs through the design research literature that has to do with people's attachment to design objects, and particularly in the literature that address how this attachment takes place over time. I then adjusted my method so that the wardrobe sessions would be combined with mobile probes, casting some light in this way on what happened in the 'after life' of Mads Nørgaard's design articles in the wardrobes of my informants. Based on this, I arrive at the following conclusions:

First, I regard the respective ideas of 'favourites' represented here as being driven forward by a wardrobe perspective that is based on Shove et al.'s model of 'having' and 'doing'. As I have sketched out in the figure below, this model can be used to operationalise how my informants interact with their wardrobes through past, present and future dress objects and dress practices, with which they try to 'solve' a given set of dressing dilemmas through what they put on and wear.

## INFORMANT'S FAVOURITES:



A. Present practice

B. Future practice

1 New or not yet acquired dress objects required for imagined dressing dilemmas

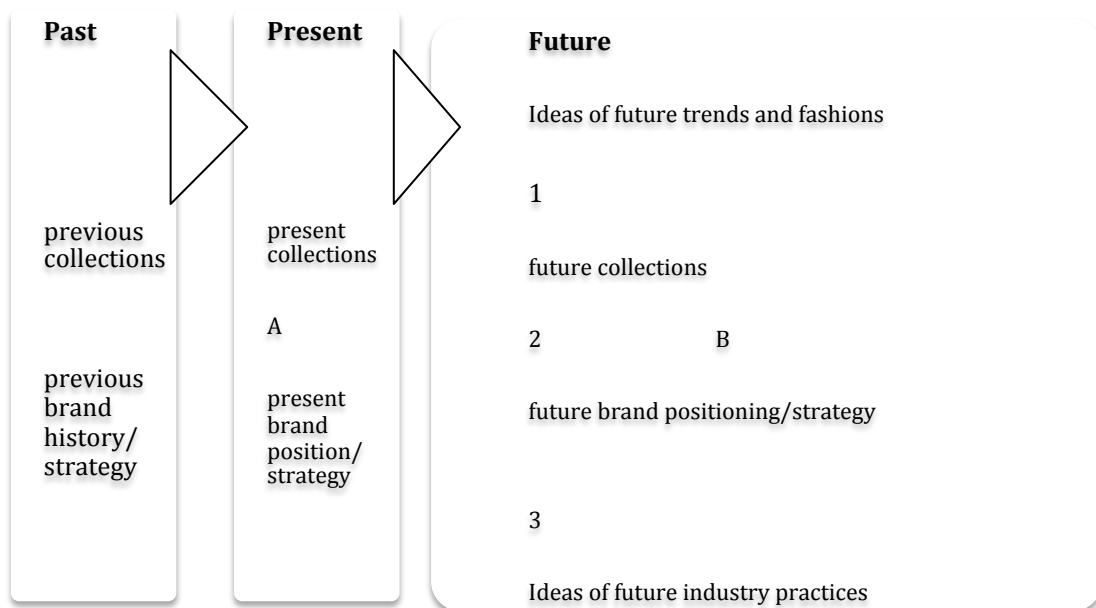
2. Dress objects and dressing dilemmas in balance, now and for the immediate future

3. New or not yet realized ways of solving dressing dilemmas

Shove et al.'s model of 'having' and 'doing', as seen through a wardrobe perspective, illustrating how my informant's ideas of 'favourites' are based on past, present and future wardrobes and dress practices

In relating this to my framework of 'sensory anchoring', such a diachronic/processual view can help explain how my informants selected their styles from Mads Nørgaard's collection, and what happened to the articles during the use phase. If on the other hand, I make use of the same model to understand Mads Nørgaard's idea of favourites, as seen from a fashion industry perspective, I would suggest that it looks like this (see next page):

## MADS NØRGAARD'S FAVOURITES:



A. Present practice

B. Future practice

1 New or not yet designed collections required for imagined trends and fashions

2. Collections and brand position/strategy in balance, now and for the immediate future

3. New or not yet realized ways of conducting business in the fashion industry

Shove et al.'s model of 'having' and 'doing', as seen through the way the Mads Nørgaard brand designs and operates, based on which the design firm generates its distinctive idea of 'favourites'

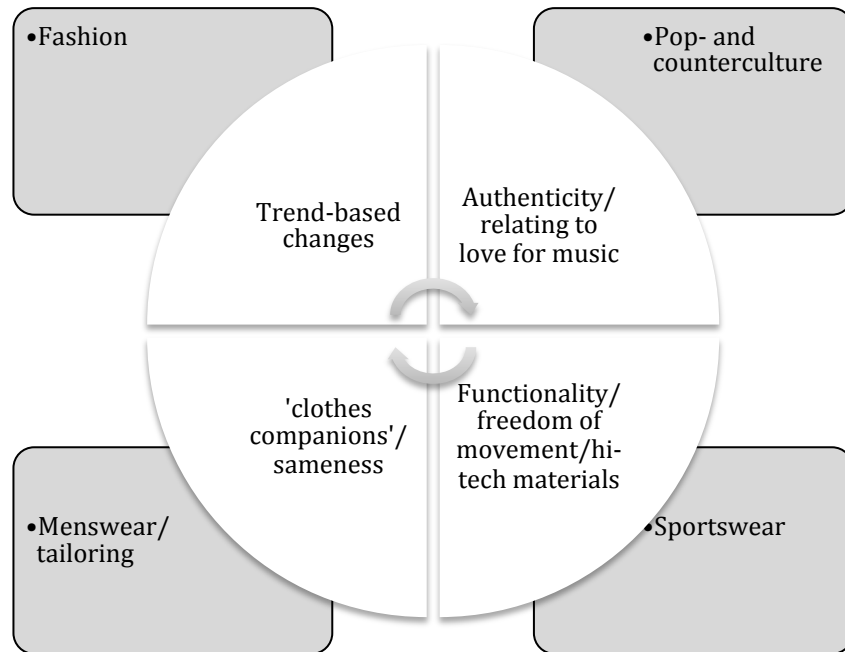
Based on this, Mads Nørgaard has developed his idea of 'favourites' as an attempt to create continuity in a line of business that is normally dominated by the virtue of change. About this, Mads says:

**It is difficult to have both 'motor' and 'anchor' in this industry. If you have too much of the first, it becomes ephemeral and frivolous, and if you have too much of the second, it becomes too dry and boring. If fashion can do something good, it is to drive you forward, without making you unfaithful to yourself. You don't change everything each season, but you don't get stuck either.**

When correlating this with the two models of 'favourites', what becomes clear is that they each address their respective versions of what Shove et al. call 'images of having' and 'images of doing': how my informants are trying, on the one hand, to solve their dressing dilemmas by daily negotiations of appearance, which evolve in slowly-changing cycles; and, on the other hand, how Mads Nørgaard as a designer tries to balance between change and continuity, but still needs to follow the seasonal changes of the fashion industry.

This can be related to a second and synchronic perspective. As I sketched out in part I, I regard the fashion system as being very largely directed towards the identity crisis that takes place in people's younger years. Here, people search for who to be and who to become, and therefore they repeatedly 'try on' new identities. Often, these try-outs have short life spans, since they are discarded for new and more appropriate ones. The fashion system, as it works today, thrives on this mechanism, because it constantly offers new looks and new identities. And with the emphasis on even more hastily changing styles and trends, it's as if fashion, as a system, sustains people in this limbo of youth, where they are in search of themselves: in other words, what is being addressed is Erikson's moratorium number V, the youth moratorium, or 'Adolescence'. However, when I look at how my informants interact with their wardrobes, they move on from this period of testing out identities in their younger years, and eventually come to form more stable ones that are adjusted only from time to time. Thereby, they have to move beyond the borders of the skills, codes and practices of 'fashion', and it is here that a discrepancy often emerges between production and consumption of dress objects. As was the case with Torben and Jonas, this new set of informants also makes use of bricolage in this transition, navigating between various sartorial systems. Below, I have highlighted some of the dress objects and practices that I find to be related to this framework (see next page).

## SARTORIAL SYSTEMS OF JACOB, PELLE AND MICHAEL

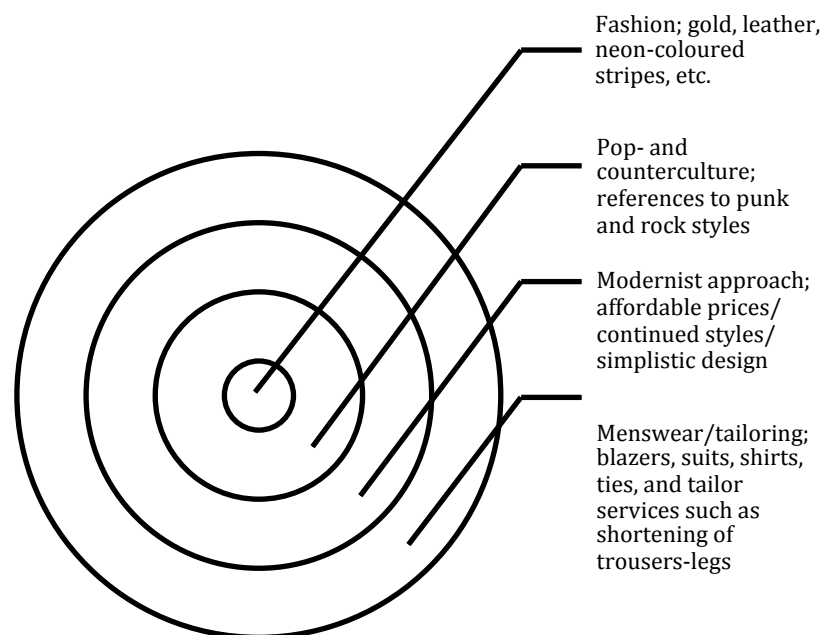


- Fashion**                    *codes:* Jacob's Burberry scarf, his 'sporty' shirts, or his black jeans. Affection and knowledgeability about fashion designer brands such as Hugo Boss, Paul Smith, Eton, Burberry. In particular, Pelle's affection for 'secret' and trend-leading brands such as Japanese Edwin.  
*skills, practices:* The way Michael has found a more fashionable silhouette, or the way Pelle wishes to be a first-mover with brands such as i.e. Paul Smith.
- Pop- and counterculture**                    *codes:* Michael's rock style. Pelle's T-shirts with communist slogans. Jacob's identity as 'The Disco Kid'.  
*skills, practices:* They way of perceiving these styles as something authentic or 'close to the heart'/ 'at home', and as indicators of shared taste group preferences. The way wearing these objects makes them feel and act 'young', as Michael when he plays in his rock band.
- Menswear/ tailoring**                    *codes:* Their shirts, blazers, ties and suits. Pelle's shoes with a hard heel.  
*skills, practices:* Dress objects worn to feel and look 'adult', and to appear as a man of authority and experience (particularly, Pelle and Jacob).
- Sportswear**                    *codes:* Pelle's homewear, such as hoodies and sweatpants, and his affection for American sportswear.  
*skills and practices:* How Pelle can move freely about in these objects so that he can relax from work, and how he makes use of these references to 'soften up' his appearance and appear relaxed and casual.

These systems are all represented in one way or another in the Nørgaard brand. But unlike the informants in their wardrobes, Mads Nørgaard is compelled to relate his

practice as a designer and as a company owner to the skills, codes and practices of 'fashion'. He does not have the option of stepping out of the system, because he is part of it himself. In this way, the other sartorial systems he engages with becomes sub-systems. Accordingly, I regard his practice through a particular take on 'fashion' developed within the brand, but nonetheless on the premises of the fashion system. What Mads tells me is that in order to do so, he uses the more stabile references as 'anchor' in his designs, and has decided at some point to place fashion as a 'motor' at the centre of all that he does. This means that, quite literally, 'fashionable' design features like gold and glitter, leather, and bright, neon'ish colours, are implemented in most of his designs. Below is a visualisation of this view:

### THE NØRGAARD BRAND AND THE SARTORIAL SYSTEMS



Visualisation model of the way that the Nørgaard brand engages with the four sartorial systems today, where 'fashion' is centrally positioned.

Besides displaying actual features in his design, he also needs to follow the practices of the fashion system in the sense that he has to maintain a close correspondence between his PR department and gatekeepers like fashion editors and bloggers who can disseminate his product. And the brand has to be visible and active on the social media channels as well. In this way, he follows – as do most fashion brands - the cycles of



seasonal collections and pre-collections, of international fashion weeks, and of seasonal trends like particular silhouettes, colours, patterns and references. In this way, his idea of 'favourites' is adjusted a bit every season, even if a few styles remain almost the same year after year. In this way, the practices of the brand differ largely from the practices of my informants, who adjust their wardrobes in slow cycles, most drastically in connection with larger changes in their social settings, or to body changes.

According to Mads Nørgaard himself, my project casts reflections on the gap between the practices of his company and what happens in the 'after life' of his design, a gap that is often difficult to overcome:

**Within my company, I always try to remember that we were kind of born with a lot of pre-assumptions, and that we know too much, and that we communicate our design in a way that is aimed far too exclusively at insiders. NOBODY knows what we mean when we speak of 'SS14'. The ones in the fashion business, they know, but when we talk about it together, we are up in each other's asses. So, if you wish to sell something, then you don't call it 'SS14', but 'Spring-Summer 2014', and so forth. Because people simply don't understand what it is that we are saying.**

**What your study tells me is that all the ideas behind our design, and all the mumbo-jumbo, pretty much don't play a role whatsoever when people wear it. They consider whether it's good design or not. What is created in this very limited space of this 'SS14' fashion universe might very well get some kind of a life out there, where something else happens. There are all kinds of lives, and 'SS14' is just one part of that.**

Based on this, I conclude that my wardrobe research cast back reflections on a company like the Nørgaard brand in particular, and on the industry in general, in the sense that it addresses the transitions of dress objects from being part of a brand to being part of a wardrobe. And thereby, how the skills, codes and practices of the fashion system might be central in the *production* of dress objects, but sometimes even very far from being central in the *consumption* of dress objects. As for my informants thus far, all five of them are engaged much more with the sartorial systems of pop-and counterculture and menswear/tailoring than they are in the system of 'fashion'. This can be seen in the way they are not occupied with change, but rather with adjustments of stabile patterns, in the way that they are oriented towards musical genres and cognate dress styles, and in their interest in re-finding lost 'clothes companions' through made-to-measure wares or tailoring.

### *Next steps*

After this project, the interest I was already nurturing in the discrepancy between the production and the consumption of dress objects only increased. Finding that sensory aspects of dressing meant so much in the decision-making processes of my informants, I now yearned to explore the gap between a visual orientation towards stylistic codes and a sensory orientation towards shapes, textures, smells, and the tactility of dressing. And last not least, I wanted to explore the way that these elements help constitute a sensation of 'feeling right' in the wearer's mind. Fuelled by this, my basic idea was that nobody, apart from the users, knows so well the three-dimensional and tactile aspects of dress objects than does a designer. I was very influenced by the way we had been discussing these aspects at my workplace at Design School Kolding. How particularly, since the early 1990s, the frequency of change in fashion has been increasing, forcing designers to work with dress objects as 'looks': flat, two-dimensional shapes that reflect the latest trends. While this is particularly true in the 'high street' sector, this development has affected the remaining sectors of the fashion industry as well. This has been mirrored by constant cutbacks in curriculum of design skills like cutting out or drawing at most Western design schools during recent decades, a reality that I have previously discussed in my report, *Fashion Research at Design Schools* (Skjold 2008).

Because of all this, I was curious to see whether my wardrobe research might be a way to reflect more deeply on these issues in the context of collaborating with a designer. This entailed that I now wished to turn from focusing on an industry perspective to focusing on the way that fashion designers are being taught to design, and on the way that they design when they go forth to work in the industry. I therefore accepted a call from the department of product design at Kolding, where they asked me to apply my wardrobe research to shoe design. The Danish shoe company, ECCO, had agreed to set up a collaborative program with Kolding that consisted of teaching, seminars, workshops, and research projects. They were evidently interested in my approach, and I accepted the invitation. Thereby, the format of the project was in some ways defined by this reality, but I found that I could turn such constraints and alterations to my advantage.

So, what I have done in this next project is to try and have a second filter on my interviews, in the shape figure of a designer that I collaborate with. Together, we

conducted four wardrobe sessions – with only minor adjustments in method, but the overall method was altered to include a designer's point of view. It is particularly in this part of the thesis that I see an entanglement of method and outcome, such as described by Binder & Brandt (2008). Thus, the clustering method became very central here, as a main central tool for dialogue between me and the designer I was working with and me. Prior to the project, which was conducted between August 2011 and June 2012, I had had enjoyed the opportunity of trying out my wardrobe sessions together with students at Design School Kolding. In the autumn of 2010, I had a small study group with volunteers, carrying out work that was based on my idea of wardrobe research. This way, I had had gained some experience as to how designers might approach the whole idea of wardrobes, and how they might engage with user experience in their design processes. In the initial phase of the project, this resulted in a kick-off lecture for a workshop-series in Kolding about shoe design. The fact that this third part of my thesis came to be about shoes was caused by outside external factors, but for me this served to it contributed to my reflections about sensory anchoring; no other dress object can highlight sensory aspects of dressing better than shoes, since they, in particular, form the way we walk, run, dance, and pose. Accordingly, as designer Helle Graabæk and I worked our way through the interviews and analysing processes, we were very observant of how our informants experienced their shoes through their sensory apparatus. How certain smells, sounds, tactile qualities played a role in the processes of selecting shoes, as well as the way the informants' bodies were manipulated to move and pose in certain ways by their shoes. Altogether, we became highly absorbed in *how it felt* for the wearer to be inside of the shoe. This attitude coloured the whole project, and thereby Ingold's concept of 'dwelling' (Ingold 2000/2004/2008) took on paramount importance as a dialogic tool, and as well the framework proposed by Jordan in the field of 'emotional design' (Jordan 2000) did. These texts were not only used to frame the project theoretically, but also functioned, in a very 'hands-on' manner, as dialogic tools that could generate shared understandings of the field work material, and expose our different biases. The final output thereby became the process of dialogue between Graabæk and me, giving rise to reflections on the limitations, potentials and perspectives of the wardrobe sessions in relation to design processes.





**PART III**  
**THE ECCO PROJECT**

## **Introduction**

### *Background, aims and context*

As has been mentioned, the ECCO project was conducted under the auspices of Design School Kolding. Here, a format has been developed to promote collaborative projects with the design industry that builds on two sub-projects which are connected: one called a 'basic research project' which has an academic focus, and the other called 'an applied project', which has its focus on design processes. The two projects must be connected, so that the basic research project prepares frameworks and understandings that are carried out in the applied project by designers – preferably in collaboration with the industry partner. With this format, Design School Kolding has two objectives in mind: one is to strengthen the relation to industry partners, and thereby provide students with know-how; another is to bridge academic research with design practice in collaborative projects and teaching, which has been a long-term strategy for the school (Skjold 2008; Bang & Nissen 2009). Thus, the ECCO project represents a 'basic research project' on the use and design of shoes. It is funded by Danish shoe design company, ECCO, which has a three-year collaborative program with Design School Kolding, consisting of teaching courses assisted by technicians and designers from ECCO, along with a programme of exhibitions, seminars, workshops, and research. The project was thus developed to frame and inform an applied research project, in which I did not take part. My role was to manage, based on the wardrobe method I had developed throughout my PhD project, this first project in collaboration with designer Helle Graabæk. The output was to be a booklet with material from both projects, to be published along with the presentation of a closing exhibition (Skjold in Frederiksen (ed.) 2013). The booklet works, alongside publications from previous projects (e.g. Schultz (ed.) 2011), as an informative eye-opener to industry, teachers and students, and is therefore communicated in non-academic language. However, a further output of the project was to transform the material into a section of my thesis. Finally, the material is to be communicated to the staff and students on Design School Kolding, in the form of lectures and workshops on use experience and shoe design.

*Overall context for the project: the bridging of academia and design practice*

While “The Nørgaard Project” was directed towards the logics and practices of the industry, what I wanted to accomplish here was to address how use experience could feed into the fashion design education, and into design processes. Working together with Helle Graabæk afforded me the opportunity to learn from her experience as a trained designer who has been working in the industry for years. In the project, we took the idea of bridging academia and design practice very literally, and tried to establish dialogic platforms that could help form shared understandings. As such, this part of the thesis takes its departure in current challenges and potentials of interdisciplinarity in the area of design, i.e., in how creative areas like design have been pushed to enter the knowledge economy due to top-down strategies in Europe, and in how the industry has simultaneously been attracted to creativity and 'design thinking' in the pursuit of new and innovative business models (Skjold 2008). In connection with this, design has been on the political agenda as it flagships local branding strategies, according to the presumption that culture and creativity is a source of growth (Pratt 2000). These changing structures and ideas have brought about a blurring of professional competencies on both sides, which I regard as fruitful albeit challenging.

In the area of design, there has been a movement away from craftsmanship towards an art discourse that allegedly legitimises design as highly positioned in the hierarchy of the arts. Within fashion design, this has resulted in a move away from what McRobbie refers to as 'the rag trade' (2000), both in education and in the public debate. In Denmark as well as in other Western countries, fashion is being displayed as 'fashion art', highlighting the *auteur* position of single designers like Henrik Vibskov or Anne Sofie Madsen as representatives of our 'Danish DNA' (Rasmussen (ed.) 2006). Hence, designers that head up 'design-led' fashion companies such as these are hyped in the fashion media and presented at design museums as exciting and new types of artists, while at the same time, their work is treated as 'a form of entertainment which will pull the crowds' (Anderson 2000: 374). The same shift is currently happening within product design, as has been addressed by Poynor, who warns that the concept of 'design art' undermines the characteristics of design itself (Poynor 2007). As Poynor sees it, it is highly problematic to try and legitimise design as art because this indicates that art is high culture and thereby has more critical potential than design, whereas in reality, the two art forms have equal critical potential in their own rights, and on their own



conditions. I subscribe to this view, and see the concept of 'critical design' as conducted by e.g. Dunne & Raby (2001), as a way forward, where both scholarly approaches and designerly skills can meet and pose questions to current norms and practices, without letting go of the particularities of design.

The relevance of this discussion has been shown in the study plans at design schools for decades now, where academic curricula and discourses have increased the frequency of major cutbacks related to teaching in design craft and skill (Skjold 2008). If replacing the concept of 'fashion art' with 'critical fashion design', however, it might also be possible to build bridges between academia and design practice in a way that strengthens the field of design instead of undermining it. There has simply been too much emphasis on the conceptualisation of design, and too little concern about shape and materiality, as (fashion) design departments in countries like Denmark have pursued new territory fuelled by academic thinking. On the other hand, the development of design research has fuelled 'research through design', as phrased by Frayling (1993), i.e., designers that are 'taking back the experiment' from academia, as stated by Binder & Brandt (2008), in order to apply it to design practice and provide new meanings and understandings of design.

Throughout this development, Design School Kolding has attempted to uphold an emphasis on crafts and skills in their educational programmes; this has not always been an easy task. However, both Graabæk and I have found it very inspiring that the school has managed to build bridges between design practice and scholarly practice. Therefore, I regard this project as an attempt to build further platforms of understanding between academic and designerly biases and practices, in the shape of dialogic tools that function as a shared framework for discussion and analysis. It is on the canvas of these considerations that this project has been formed.

## **Workshops with students**

During my time as a PhD Candidate at Design School Kolding, I have had the opportunity to make use of the framework of the wardrobe method in teaching situations.

As I entered the ECCO project, it was with these experiences in mind. So, in a sense, the student workshops worked as preliminary studies, establishing an understanding of how designers might approach the method and use it in their work. In the following, I will exemplify this through my meeting with the students, Louise Sigvardt and Mark Ken Domino Tan, who participated in my study group on the wardrobe method in the autumn semester of 2010, and through the way that the students used their own small-scale studies of people in their wardrobes in a shoe-workshop in November 2011.

### *Study group with Louise and Mark*

The study group was part of a series of workshops consisting of 4 meetings of 3 hours each, which would be sequenced over the course of a semester. It was not one of the mandatory courses for the students, and thus worked as an open space for discussion. In my study group, I had provided the students with few but essential readings about user-centred design, and about research in wardrobes (Larsen 2007; Raunio 2007; Gaver et al. 2004; Guy, Green and Banim 2001). Since I knew from experience that design students in general do not have much time to read, the texts functioned as a framework for discussing their own work. I started out by asking them to use Guy, Green and Banim's distinctions of 'the woman I fear I could be', 'the woman I am most of the time', and 'the woman I want to be' (2001:203) to understand their own wardrobes. Accordingly, they were asked to go home and take pictures of clothes belonging to following categories: 1. the person I wish to be, 2. the person I am most of the time, 3. the person I used to be, and 4. the person I no longer am. The last category derived from distinctions posited by Klepp, who mentions how women discard clothes that are outdated or obsolete motivated by various physical or psychological reasons (Klepp 2001:117).



From left to right: Louise's photos of 1. the person I wish to be, 2. the person I am most of the time, 3. the person I used to be, 4. the person I no longer am.

When my student, Louise, returned for the following meeting, we would talk about these photos, and about how her relation to her own wardrobe influenced how she approached her work as a designer. What she said was that in terms of style, silhouettes and colour approach, her design work and her wardrobe correlated very closely. However, as we talked more, she told me that she had been advised several times during her student years not to design for her own body, since it did not match the ideal measures of the 'fashionable' body. Therefore, she had learned to distinguish between her own body and the body she designs for. Because I was very upset to hear this, we would discuss in the group what this meant to her work, and how she might turn her own body into an advantage in terms of consumer segment, production format, etcetera.

Apart from this discussion, I experienced that the students approached the wardrobe method as a tool in their design process in ways I had not necessarily anticipated. Louise made her own small-scale study through sending out mails to women she knew, asking them to take a photo of a dress object they defined as 'luxurious', and state, in a few sentences, what was luxurious about the article.



Photo taken by Louise's friend, Thit, who sent Louise this photo of her most 'luxurious' dress object, a coat from Max Mara.

Apart from Thit's coat, Louise had several photos of kimonos, among other objects. As these photos arrived, Louise would work with them systematically and analyse the cut, the trimmings, the colours and the style, and then generate design ideas. From here, she modelled these ideas into silhouettes that mirrored her interest in the clash between luxury and streetwear, and used this in her MA collection that was called 'old new - new old'.



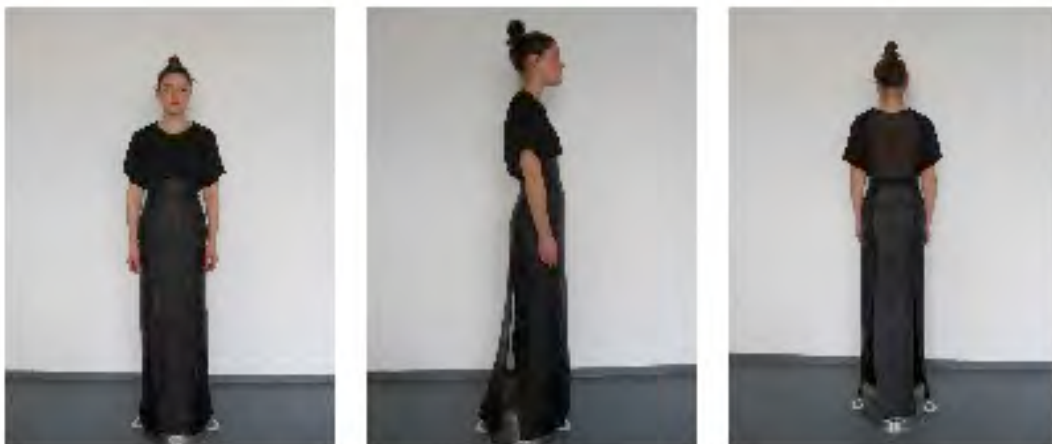
Images of Louise's MA collection, 'old new - new old', where she made use of the wardrobe method as a research tool for finding silhouettes, trimmings and colours (© Copenhagen Fashion Week)

Another student, Mark Kenly Domino Tan, also made a small-scale study, inasmuch as he asked three of his former boyfriends of his to document their favourite items in their wardrobe. Instead of using the phrasings I had proposed, he had asked them to document 1. what is hot, 2. memories, and 3. a classic.

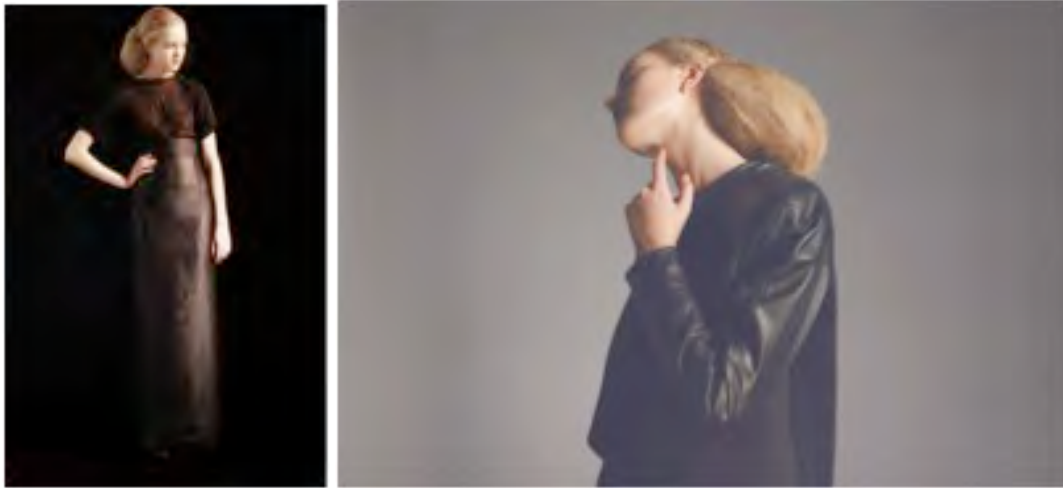


Photos from Mark's small-scale research on the wardrobes of his ex-boyfriends: From left to right – 1. what is hot, 2. memories, and 3. a classic.

As was the case with Louise, Mark would go back into his studio and look closely at details in the clothes, and reflect on the material. He then came up with the idea to call the collection 'Love': this decision was based on the colours and materials from the photos.



A silhouette from Mark's collection, 'Love', as can be seen on a fitting model



Photos from a feature where Mark made use of his own 'Love' collection. Photographer: Sacha Maric. Model: Nicolina from Scoop Models. © Mark Ken Domino Tan.

Mark would make use of the materials he found interesting to work with, and as can be seen in the final collection, he was preoccupied with the meeting between leather and wool in similar colours. He found this interesting especially because all three of the participants in his project had almost only white, grey and black dress objects - a very minimal colour palette - whereas there would be diversity in the materials and shapes that he could use for creating contrasts.

### *Shoe workshop*

In November 2011, I gave a lecture to a class in Kolding that was comprised of a group of students who were attending a workshop on shoes. This workshop was part of the collaboration between ECCO and Design School Kolding, so I was asked to talk about my research project on wardrobes, in order to prepare the students for making their own small-scale user studies. They were asked to go out and interview people in their homes and wardrobes, and use the footage as the inspiration to create one men's shoe, and one women's shoe. They were reminded to look not only for visual parameters affecting the people they interviewed, but also emotional or physical parameters that affect them. When the workshop was brought to a close, the student's projects were displayed as an exhibition at Design School Kolding, and a booklet was published with the projects (Frederiksen (ed.) 2012).



This shoe was inspired by a wardrobe study of an older woman who said that she would *never* wear high heels, because if she did, she would break her legs. Students Anna Nydam, Mads Hanghøj and Kirsten Nydam would take this story and transform it into a shoe that is 'turned inside out', so that the 'skeleton' of the shoe - the structure of the heel - is visible. © Design School Kolding 2012



This shoe was inspired by a boy who told the interviewer that he had experienced having a nail run right through his foot - this accordingly became a heel with nails. Designed by students Solveig Stilling, Ida Blomstrøm and Iben Thode Johansen ©Design School Kolding 2012



'The blister shoe', based on a person who told how it was so very painful to have blisters on the foot. Nina Lolle, Nana Odderskær and Rasmus Gissel ©Design School Kolding 2012

What the students did was to take phrases, sentences, real-life stories, or the dreams

and fears of their informants, and transform them into design ideas. They generally did not make use of actual design features from the collections like the materials, the shapes or the trimmings, but worked on a much more abstract and derivative level.

Summing up both projects, all of the students implemented the material from wardrobes of friends or family in such a way that the design carried traces of actual user experiences, as opposed to the typical 'personae' for whom they normally design. Thus, the process appeared to function as an eye-opener for the students to catch sight of people's daily concerns and needs - physical, emotional and social. On the other hand, they pretty much went about 'business as usual'. They had been given an assignment, and they solved it. They did not raise any questions about the missing correlation between the people they had interviewed and the 'fashion personae' for whom they are being taught to design during the greater portion of their student years - and when they enter the industry. Only in the case of Louise did there seem to be an awareness of the difference between her own experience with dressing, and the person she is designing for. Apart from this, students would grab onto any design idea that stemmed from their interviews, and move ahead with that, without any further considerations.

Because I got the opportunity to do the ECCO project, I wished to explore this missing correlation further. That is, to explore how studying people in wardrobes can make designers aware of the gap between how most people interact with dress objects in their everyday lives, and, on the other hand, the ideal and non-existing person they are repeatedly being asked to design for. In this sense, the project is about exploring the opportunities for design processes that are seated in knowledge about use experiences. Whereas the Nørgaard project addressed perspectives for the industry, this project addresses perspectives with regard to the design process, and the educational perspectives in relation to fashion design. Thus, the framework of the project, my prior experiences with students, and my reflections from part I and II, formed these research questions:

1. How might the wardrobe method help to generate a more holistic approach to fashion design than what is often the case today?
  - How might the project cast back reflections on the way that fashion designers work?
  - How might the project cast back reflections on the way that fashion designers are educated?



## Method

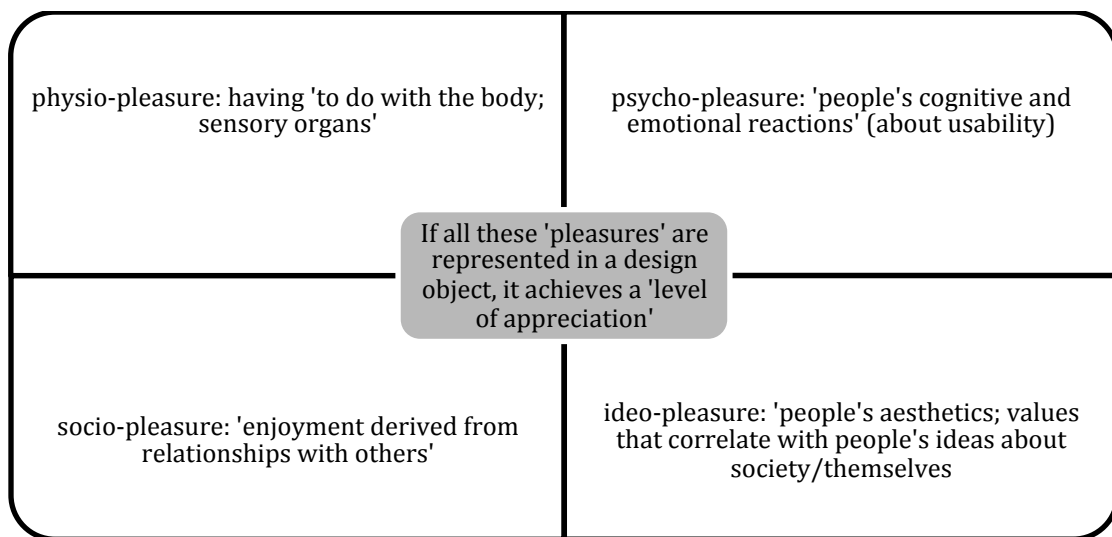
### *Getting the feel of shoes; tools for dialogue*

The emphasis, from the outset of the project, was to take a step away from a highly visual approach to fashion and dress, and one step closer to the sensory experiences of the wearers. In order to start out with shared understandings before the interview-sessions commenced, designer Graabæk and I therefore agreed to share and discuss readings that would address a holistic perspective on dressing that embraced both parameters. These readings are to be understood as both a theoretical framing for the project and as *tools for dialogue* that could generate a platform for discussion and understanding. We were each going to suggest some literature to share, but agreed that we would have to limit the shared readings to one text per person.

First, we developed a great interest in the concept of 'emotional design' through reading and discussing Patrick Jordan's book, *Designing Pleasurable Products. An Introduction to the New Human Factors* (Jordan 2000). This was Graabæk's choice. Through reading Jordan's distinctions together, our focus sharpened on bodily, spiritual, experiential, and practical parameters of dressing, so that it became possible to separate these distinct levels from each other and address them individually. Jordan worked well as a dialogic tool because he is writing not only to academics, but also to designers. In fact, large parts of the book are structured as a guide to people working in the design industry who do not necessarily have academic qualifications. As such, one could say that his book is about opening the eyes of people who are working in the industry to parameters that affect people when they interact with design objects. Jordan's approach is not about lead users, as is the case in the area of 'user-driven innovation', as defined by von Hippel (2005), but it is still characterised by an idea that by systematically analysing how individual users interact with a product, designers can create more popular and sellable products. In this way, the individual that is studied gets to be representational of a whole segment of consumers, which a given design company can target - in other words, the individual user works as a 'personae' for the designer. As such, Jordan inscribes himself in a traditionally American tradition, as opposed to the democratic Scandinavian

tradition, within the field of participatory design, as this has been defined by, for example, Sanders & Stappers (2008) and Schuler & Amioka (1993). In Jordan's own words, his distinctions of 'four pleasures' (see fig. 1) 'can help to make it easier for those involved in the design process to consider the full spectrum of the sorts of pleasure a product can bring' (2000:15). Jordan defines pleasurable products as products that have 'emotional, hedonic and practical benefits' (2000:12). He further views this as articulating the difference between a fulfilment of people's 'need pleasure' - i.e., how basic, physical needs are met by a given design object – and how design objects that awaken positive feelings on all four parameters awaken a 'pleasure of appreciation' (2000:14).

### JORDAN'S FOUR PLEASURES MODEL



In the project, we have perceived these 'pleasures' as a way of distinguishing between active and passive shoes, seeing that the more all the levels of pleasure are represented in a given pair of shoes, the more they are treasured, or as Jordan would say, 'appreciated': they have become *favourites*. In our following analysis, we have worked with our participants as 'personae' figures, each representing a segment of consumers with various emphasis on psychological, physical, social or ideological levels of attachment, as has been proposed by Jordan. Throughout the course of the entire project, Jordan's distinctions helped us to share our dialogue, even if we were both biased by our respective experiences and knowledge from academia and design practice. As a dialogic tool, the book helped to increase our awareness about the interaction between participants and design objects, and to identify the various parameters.

My choice was ethnographer Tim Ingold's short text, "Culture on the Ground. The World Perceived Through the Feet" (2004), similarly worked to raise our awareness of bodily aspects of dressing. Throughout the text, Ingold argues that the 'civilised' West has split our bodies in two. Above the waist is our 'civilised' part, with our mind, our eyes and our hands: all that allegedly separates us from the animals. Below is what transports our physical bodies in the physical world. He describes how in the travelling letters of the cultural elite of early modernity, the world is described as passing by them as a 'groundless culture' consisting only of visual and spiritual sensations. Walking, and touching the ground, is for 'the poor, the criminal, the young, and above all, the ignorant' (Ingold 2004:322). He similarly displays how Western shoe design has maltreated and deformed our feet, as a direct consequence of our disengagement with the physical world around us, and our wish to tame all that has to do with nature. As can be seen in much of his work, Ingold tries to re-assemble a dominant, Cartesian split between body and mind in the West, by displaying how we, as human, are indeed not only dependent on but also part of nature. He believes that we 'perceive not with the eyes, the ears or the surface of the skin, but with the whole body', and that we experience *within* the physical world, not *upon* it (2004:330). In this way, Ingold diverts from a Miller'ian definition of material culture (Miller 2007), which Ingold accuses of being utilitarian, hedonistic and 'blinded' by the idea that our interaction with man-made artefacts is detached from nature (Ingold 2007:33). Rather conversely, Ingold states, we need to re-embed our practices in nature and in our bodies, in order to achieve a more responsible, holistic, and balanced interaction with design objects. Thus, to be physically and ecologically embedded in the world means, in Ingold's perspective, to emphasise not only what design objects *look* like, but also what they *feel* like.

Following this mode of thought worked to constantly emphasise *bodily* aspects of dressing in the project, which indeed focused on whole body experiences. We used this approach to locate experiences of dressing that would stem not only from the respective senses of smell, touch, hearing and taste, but from the 'whole body' experiences of standing and walking with various shoes in the collections. This approach framed how bodily poses, gestures and movements become manipulated and determined through footwear, and thereby affect our dress practices. We resolved to be very aware of bodily or sensory aspects in the interview situation, just as we would emphasise these aspects in our analysis. As dialogic tools between research and practice, these texts divert from what is used in many design research project in the area of user-centred design. Insofar

as many of these studies make use of prototypes and other types of design material like fabric samples (as can be seen in, for example, Halse et al. (eds.) 2010 and Bang 2011), this project is coloured by the fact that I am not a trained designer. Since I was put in charge of the outcome (the academic text), and since I had to produce it (write it), I decided that we would use text as a shared tool.

### *Sessions, with two eyes*

Because of the respective biases of Graabæk and myself, there were a few more adjustments to be made in terms of method. We divided our roles during the interview so that I would have the movie camera and be the interviewer, while Graabæk would take pictures of design details with her camera. In this way, I would be able to pursue my research objectives while Graabæk would be able to look more closely into the collections. This meant that after the sessions, we would have photos in high-resolution that she could work with in detail, as opposed to the low-resolution 'screen shots' from the film footage of my prior projects. Graabæk would take pictures of the various clusters, of the way our participants interacted with their shoes during the interview, and of single shoes and details.

Graabæk insisted that after the sessions, she would have to take pictures of each pair of shoes on a white background, in order to reduce visual 'noise'. For this, she brought along some white paper, or she borrowed a white sheet, upon which she placed each pair of shoes. Already here, she actually became my *fifth* informant in the project, since I wanted to understand why she needed to reduce the background. For me, as a researcher, I find the background 'noise' extremely interesting. Because I regarded her concerns as a way to understand her biases as a designer, I asked her if she would be willing to send me written documents about her on-going process. I would also be talking with her about these issues with her in e-mails, and on the phone when we had a chance to talk, and I further asked her to keep a log book throughout the whole project. This material helped me to understand how she saw the differences between working 'as usually', and working with me in the wardrobes.

In this way, the ECCO project runs on two parallel tracks: one track where I continue my research on users and their daily selection of dress, and another track where I study

Graabæk, and form dialogues with her as we go along. This process demanded a high level of attentiveness from both of us, as we did not have the same bias when we were observing and analysing. Hence, I have tried to turn our different gazes into a strength of the project, rather than a drawback, through making our differences explicit throughout my revisions, summations, and analysis.

### *Summation of method*

The project started out with two shared readings of literature. This was done in order to coordinate our framework, to match our expectations, and to establish a shared understanding of what we yearned to have emphasised in the project.

The sample of this project diverted slightly from the previous ones, especially since we were interviewing two men and two women. However, they all represented the same age group, and the same societal group as the informants in the previous projects. They were again selected on the premises of accessibility, which means to say that they belonged to our personal network and/or facebook network.

The reason for including women in the project was mostly the special character of the project: it was a collaborative project; and it was funded independently of my PhD-funding – hence, I could not decide on my own who to interview. It was a wish expressed by both Graabæk, and the head of the Product Department at Design School Kolding, Mathilde Aggebo, that we would include women in the study. However, I have tried to turn this to advantage, since I could make use of the two women as an - admittedly very small - test group for my findings, and my analysis.

Each interview-session lasted 1-3 hours. This variation in timespan was mainly due to the fact that some of the informants had more shoes than others. Each session would run along two parallel tracks. I would ask the questions and hold the camera, while Graabæk would take photos of details, shapes, categories, or moments in the interviews that she found particularly interesting. Every interview would start out with me asking the informant to place the entire collection before us, beginning with the oldest shoe in the collection, and ending up with the latest purchase. In this way, these interviews differed from my previous ones, because they were not necessarily conducted inside the

actual space of the wardrobe. The important objective was to see the whole shoe collection, and the physical setting of the homes of the informants. Because shoe collections are far less space-consuming than entire wardrobes, it also became easier to apply the wardrobe biography, since the entire span of the collection could be showed visually, by simply placing the shoes in the order of purchase.

While the informants were doing this, they were encouraged to tell us about their shoes. After this, I would ask them to place some shoes in categories that I found were particularly interesting. This might happen if a feature, such as a certain shape, colour, or material re-occurred many times in the collection. As the interview went along, more and more themes like these would emerge that seemed to guide the preferences of the participants, so that it became possible to get into a more detailed discussion. When I found that the same theme would re-emerge in several discussions as the session proceeded, I would also try to understand as many aspects as possible, through categorising the collection in various orders, and through asking laddered questions. One category that would occur in every interview was passive shoes - or shopping mistakes, since this category appeared to represent various parameters concerning comfort/discomfort, and ideas of past, present and future selves, which for one reason or another did not fit into the informants' day-to-day reality. Each session would wind up with a request for any final remarks. After the interview formally ended, Graabæk would take photographs of all the shoes in the collection on a white background. For this, she brought along with her a sheet or pieces of paper (see fig. 1).

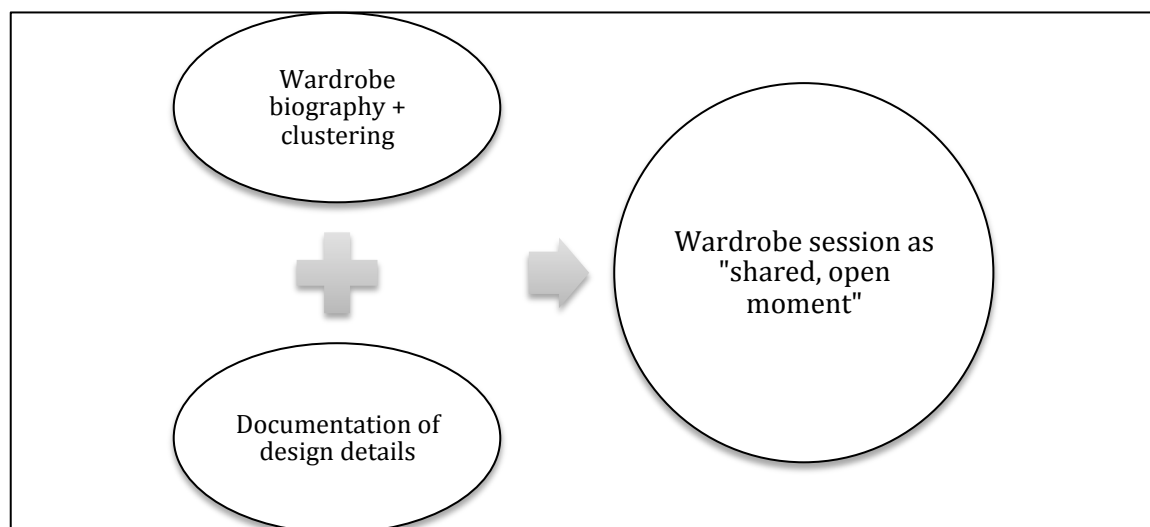


Fig 1: Method design for the wardrobe sessions of all four informants, adjusted slightly from the method in part 1+2 to include Graabæk's point of view.

After we had concluded the sessions, the process of understanding the material ran along two parallel tracks as well. For my part, I went about transcribing the interviews and started an 'open coding' process, through highlighting quotes, categories of shoes, and other aspects that I found to be interested to me in particular. This would be 1. sensory, or whole body experiences that affected each of the participants, 2. experiential aspects that would address the relation between personal and social points of orientation, and 3. biographical aspects, such as how preferences had changed or stayed the same, from the oldest to the newest shoe.

Simultaneously, Graabæk looked at her photographs, and at the transcriptions I had sent her. From this, she would build up understandings of each participant in the form of design details from the collections, along with quotes that she found interesting. On top of this, she would write notes about her process in a log book, and we had frequent conversations on Skype or on the phone about these issues. I had asked her to do this from the outset so that I would gain an understanding of how she was interacting with the material, and I asked her specifically to emphasise how working with users deviated from her previous experience as a designer. Finally, we would compare our codings, and form our analysis on the basis of these. In order to implement the visual material, we had three 24-hour sessions at a shared hotel room, where we displayed, discussed and sorted photographs, quotes, themes and categories on the walls and the floor, compared our findings and our interests, and discussed layers of understanding in our analysis. The aim of this was to conjoin the visual material solidly with the academic text. After this, the writing process began; this was something that I had to do on my own. I have, however, showed my material to Graabæk for her final comments and reflections (fig. 2).

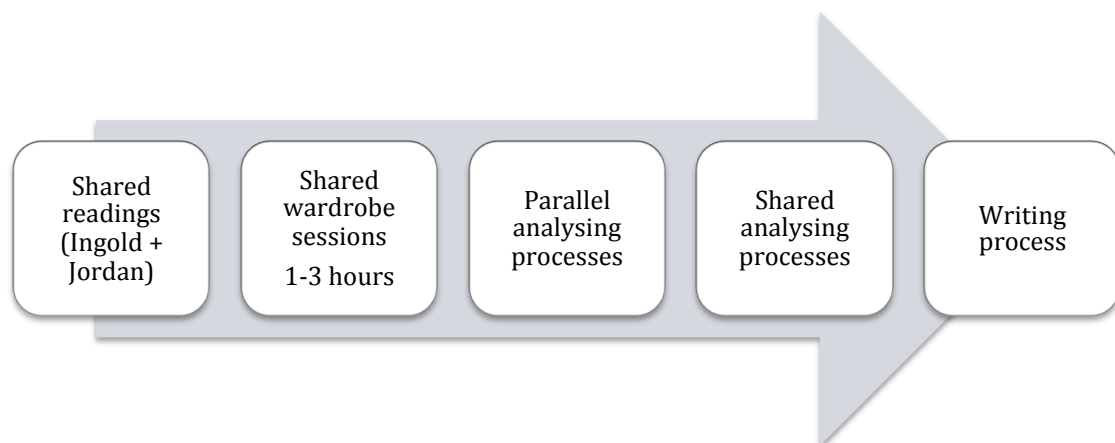


Fig. 2: Method design for the research process; whereas the first four elements were shared or conducted in parallel with shared discussions, the fifth element was done by me alone.

## THE USE OF SHOES

### Pia

Pia owns 40 pairs of shoes. She is 52 years old, and lives in a village in Jutland with her husband and three teenage kids. She works as a midwife consultant. When we arrive at her house, she is busy bringing in shoes from various places in her home into the open kitchen-dining area. She has stored some of her shoes in the hallway, some in her wardrobe in the shared bedroom, and some in the basement and a shed in the garden. In this way, she is hoping to prevent her husband from knowing how many shoes she really owns.



Pia's shoe collection, positioned according to a biographical timeline.

As she is displaying her shoes on the floor in a biographically determined sequence, she tells us a little about every one of the pairs, such as time of purchase, details she likes,



and particular events that she used them for. Looking at the whole collection, there are certain characteristic features that can be spotted right from the start. For one, she really has a lot of shoes, and many of them look rather expensive. Second, she owns quite a few brown leather boots.

When she talks about her shoes, she often mentions brands' names, or names of the more exclusive boutiques in Copenhagen and Aarhus, where she has bought the shoes. She also emphasises how she only wants the best quality. When she has finished displaying her shoes, I ask her to look at all her shoes and comment on them, and she says:

**I think I have what I need in terms of dressy shoes. I never really used them. It has mostly been boots, and these kinds of rough-looking, sturdy boots, you know?**

I find this to be quite striking, because the balance between the boots and the dressy shoes actually appears to be rather even, when one looks at the collection all together. Therefore, I want to know more about her more passive shoes, or 'shopping mistakes', and I ask her to collect these kinds of shoes and comment on why they are more or less out of use.

### *Shopping mistakes*

As it comes to light, there are more reasons why she does not use parts of her collection, aside from the shoes that she feels are simply uncomfortable to wear. For one, she has quite contradictory feelings about the more decidedly feminine shoes and boots.



Pia's passive shoes. A characteristic feature of this category is the feminine character of the design: the two pairs of high-heeled boots are too high, and the leather is too soft and thin. They are not 'rough and raw' as are her favourite boots. She purchased these pairs when she started her business and wanted something presentable and nice to wear at receptions and meetings. The brown Prada sandals (below, right) have the right colour, and the beloved plateau heel that makes them comfortable to wear, but the braided straps are too thin and too 'sweet'.

As she explains when we start to talk about her black, long-legged black boots, with the small heels, she believes that they look good on other people, but they don't feel quite right on her. She bought the two brown pairs, and the black pair, in the same period. She explains how she thought, at the time of purchase, that:

**Because of my age, then one ought to have a pair of black boots, right? A pair that I like but won't be using that much. It's not quite the right style, but I really like them. Particularly on other people.**

With regard to the greenish boots of the Freye brand that can be seen at the top right in the photo, she explains that they are doublets of one of her favourite pairs, the yellowish pair that she has used a lot. She also tells me that buying the greenish boots was a 'shopping mistake', typical of one she often makes. When she finds something she likes, she wants it in another colour as well. This has worked effectively with her All Star Converse boots, of which she has had many, in many colours, and with her Birkenstock sandals, of which she also had quite a few. But in some cases, this strategy simply hasn't worked out, since she consistently finds the doublets to be 'too boring' or in a 'boring colour'.



Pia's Freye boots: the ones she has used a lot (on the left), and the passive doublets (to the right), where the colour is wrong



This is where it worked out - she currently owns two pairs of Birkenstock sandals in bright yellow and green, and she has had more pairs. She even found a pair of green Marc Jacobs slippers that have something of the same qualities, but then they also have the exclusiveness of the brand. However, it was these shoes that gave her heel spur, when she was wearing them on a summer holiday in France. As a result, now she can rarely wear high heels or hard soles at all.

*"Every woman should have a pair of sexy, red stilettos"*

There are a great many of her more feminine shoes that are not in use as well. When I ask about this, what comes to light is that a main reason for this is that she never learned to walk in high heels when she was younger, because she was much more into the sturdy leather boots. Therefore, she prefers the plateau heel to a stiletto, because it supports her better. As we go through the many passive shoes, she explains how she has always had trouble with feminine shoes. And it seems that this is not only because of matters of comfort. She shows me her wedding shoes, which she has re-coloured black from their original white, because she found them to be too pretty and too 'sweet', which is why she has rarely worn them.



Passive shoes from Pia's youth: a pair of pink slippers; her wedding shoes, which she coloured black to make them look less "sweet"; and a pair of beige sling-backs with a leopard pattern print. As can be noticed in the case of the pink slippers, Pia's attraction to glossy surfaces started early on. Her temper and her passionate personality are also showing through in the leopard print, inasmuch as it reflects her idea about being sexy. However, since they are not sufficiently robust and sturdy in the design, she cannot wear them. They do not feel right.

I also notice how three of her passive, feminine shoes are red. Since she seems to complement her more neutrally coloured shoes with sparkly colours, this doesn't surprise me. But it does surprise me that she is not using these shoes, since they have been quite expensive for her to buy. When I ask about this, her answer sounds quite contradictory, but some of the reasoning seems to be connected with her ideas about ageing:

**This shoe, I wish I could wear. But then I think to myself: 'No, Pia,' if it was 20 years ago, it might work. But then you are bound to make some shopping mistakes because as you get older, and when you're out shopping, you think that you have another age than you really have.**



Pia's red stilettos, with different colours on the soles, a designer detail that she is very fond of. This makes the shoes special to her. The surface is glossy, and she is attracted to the colour red, but never uses the shoes. In fact, she never uses *any* of her red 'feminine' shoes.



Pia's brown and red Prada shoes, which she has almost never worn. They are simply too tall and she never learned to walk in high heels. Still, she is attracted to the glossy finish, which is to be found in several of her more feminine shoes.

Below. I have listed a number of positive and negative quotes in her dialogue about her red shoes:

Positive features:

**I always wanted a pair of red stilettos. Who hasn't?**

**These ones, well, it's only because ... I think, because I always wanted a pair of red stilettos. I think they are sexy; I think they are beautiful; I think that you can use them for everything.**

**I really like something that no one else has. I want to be first with everything. So I don't go out buying a pair of shoes because everyone else has them. Quite the contrary.**

**I have put on 10 kilogrammes now - then you feel 2 kilogrammes slimmer when you wear a small heel. I feel small and broad when I'm all down there - it's just a sensation in the body**

**I cannot wear flat shoes at a party. I am 1.75 centimetres tall, so you might think that I could, but I have to get up a little, so that one feels thin**

Negative features:

**When I was out partying and wanted to be feminine, I wore a nice dress and some sturdy boots. I was never into high stilettos or anything.**

**I could never wear anything that is uncomfortable. I would never suffer in a pair of shoes.**

**Either it is flat shoes, or it is very high shoes. It has always been my problem that there isn't anything to choose from.**

**It is simply because I never learned to walk in high heels, it must be from my early youth, when I wore all these Harley Davison boots.**

**What I have worn out, when I look at all this, are the brown shoes with a semi-high heel. And this type of shoe represents my attempts at being a little more 'feminine'. So, in reality, I might just be a little boring. Or maybe I've had a style that is all my own?**

There are more things at play here, when it comes to why she is not wearing her red shoes but still continues to buy them. Most of all, it seems that part of Pia's idea of femininity clashes with her daily life and with her demand for physical comfort. In this sense, her red shoes represent a split that she is trying to bridge, a split between aesthetic and physical preferences. As can be told by her shoe biography, she has worn out many flat-heeled boots, and has succeeded with wearing more feminine shoes in recent years. Therefore, I will now turn the focus to what she actually likes, and what constitutes her 'favourites'.

### *Brown, sturdy boots*

Pia's absolute favourite boots are her long-legged boots with semi-high crepe rubber soles of the Marc Jacobs' brand. There is a match here with most, if not all, of her preferences. First of all, they live up to her demand for high quality and exclusive brand value. Second, they fit into her daily routines and her demands for comfort. At her job, where she is attending to the needs of pregnant women, she cannot wear shoes that make noises. This would be inappropriate, she feels. Therefore, the soft crepe rubber soles are perfect, and on top of this, the boots are very comfortable to wear. The shape of the sole is similar to a wedge, which makes it supportive. Third, they conform to her aesthetic preferences, which might be seen as her comfort zone: what she wears the most, and what makes her relaxed and feel well. The natural coloured full-grain leather is a material that is repeated over and over again in her collection. The sturdy character of the material reflects her desire to look 'cool', and reminds her of her early childhood and youth, when she was wearing the same kinds of footwear. Still, their long-legged shape makes them emphasise her legs, and because they have a semi-high heel, they lift her up a bit and tip her hip, with the result that she feels slimmer and more feminine.



Pia's absolute favourite Marc Jacobs boots, which make her feel both 'rough' and feminine, and which fit her daily routines and her demands for comfort.

Pia's attraction to the aforementioned features started off with her Harley Davison boots, which she wore when she was very young. Already here, she saved up and purchased these boots, which were very expensive. They have this sturdy and robust character that she likes - the brown colour, the soft sole - and they are also long-legged. While she is reflecting on why she likes this type of boot, she tells me about how she was dreaming of looking, at that time, and what the boots meant to her:

**When I was young, my biggest problem was that I looked too sweet. I really looked a lot like 'a nice person'. My hairdresser used to tell me this, because it was really difficult for me to get a 'cooler' haircut, because my hair is so fair. At that time I had such nice legs - long and slender legs. So I used all these boots and combined them with mini-skirts and hotpants, just to look more cool.**

As it appears, Pia has carried with her a fear of looking too 'sweet', because as a young person she struggled with her petite body and her flimsy, blonde hair to look 'more cool'. What she has also carried with her is the silhouette that she describes here. As she explains to me, she still often wears chunky, sturdy kinds of boots with leggings, stockings or tight trousers, and something short, like a long shirt that bears the reminiscences of her younger silhouette. This simply 'feels right'.



Pia and I discuss the fact that she actually still wears the same silhouette as she did when she was young. Then, she wore leggings in bright patterns and colours. Now, she wears tight-fitting trousers or stockings. Then, she wore a tutu, a short skirt or hotpants. Now, she has clothes like this shirt, which has the same length. This is a silhouette that she likes and wears most of the time.

Since her younger years, she has added a few more favourite silhouettes such as body-tight wrap-around dresses that display her now curvy body. So, in that sense, she has become more daring in her exploration of her femininity. This is also the case with the feminine, dressy shoes. As she mentioned in the 'Negative features' appearing above about her red, passive shoes, the active shoes in this category have the same colour palette as her boots, which is why she feels a little boring – something that she doesn't like at all. But as a matter of fact, once we look at her favourite, dressy shoes, they have more details that she is attracted to: the glossy surface, the semi-high heel, the wedge-heel, the straps around her ankles, and the brown-yellow-green palette that she repeats over and over again. Moreover, she can actually walk in these shoes, and they do not aggravate her heel spur. In this way, it's as if she has transported features from her boots into her feminine shoes, in order to bridge the clashing disparities she experiences between the 'cool' look she wished for when she was young and her idea of a sexy, attractive woman who wears high heels.





Three of Pia's most favourite 'dressy' and 'ladylike' shoes. These are shoes that she loves to wear because they represent a combination of many of her preferences, such as the glossy surface (as exemplified on the shoe at the far left), the full-grain leather (see the shoe on the far right), the straps on the ankle (all three shoes), the semi-high heel or wedge (all three shoes), and the toned-down brown and green colour palette (all three shoes).

To sum up, Pia is quite a compulsive shopper. In spite of this, she is also a 'serial monogamist', and even a 'dedicated monogamist', who has preferred more or less the same type of footwear since her adolescence: the same feel of the body, the same shapes, textures and trimmings, and the same ensembles to match her idea of self. However, she has succeeded more and more in embracing her femininity, and now often wears ladylike shoes. However, there are rather strict limitations, in the sense that she prefers ladylike shoes that match her taste preferences. The upshot of this is that even though she has certain ideas about how to look adult, ladylike, or sexy, she still pursues the patterns she developed when she was younger.

## **Camilla**

Camilla is 48 years old and lives in Jutland with her husband and two daughters. She works as a nurse. When we arrive, she sets out her shoe collection in her combined living room and kitchen. She owns 25 pairs of shoes. In contrast to Pia, Camilla knows exactly where all of her shoes are, and we can tell that she takes very good care of them, something that she also tells us explicitly. All of her shoes are polished and cleaned when the season is over, and placed so that they will not be damaged. This

meticulousness and care seems to affect her whole collection. When she starts placing her shoes in biographical order, it appears that almost all of the shoes are still in use. Even those that are more than 20 years old she uses once in a while. She has very few passive shoes in her collection.

*Standing firmly (the Spanish heel)*

When Camilla has finished up the task of placing all her shoes in a timeline, I ask her to look at the collection and tell me what she thinks of it. She says:

**But this is my whole life! Just like a historic journey!**

She then starts telling me about her youth, and about the oldest pairs of boots in the collection. To be precise, they are not old, but she has owned exactly the same model several times since she was very young: the same colour, the same brand, the same model. It is a pair of grey 'Palladium' hiking boots in grey canvas. She bought them for the first time when she was on a Kibbutz in Israel right after high school, which was her first travel abroad. After that time, she was an eager traveller for years, until she had children. She tells me that when she was young, she wore her Palladium boots for everything, even at parties. She explains why she likes them so much:

**From when I was very young, I had these, and have travelled with Palladium - travelled, travelled, travelled a lot, and I always brought these boots and sandals, because then you could deal with everything. You could go through water or snow if you put a plastic bag inside and wore socks, and they were not too hot when it was very warm, and they make you stand firmly on a rock and stuff. So they were magnificent!**



Camilla's favourite boots of all are a pair of hiking boots of the 'Palladium' brand. She likes that they are lightweight, and that they are made out of canvas, so they don't become too warm. She appreciates the sturdy character of the design, and the shape, the texture and the colour. She has owned the exact same model several times during her adult life, and she has used them for all kinds of purposes: for work, for travel, for dancing, and even for walking through rivers and climbing mountains.

Like Pia, Camilla wears boot a lot in her everyday life. I ask her to take all of her boots aside, and place them in categories of various kinds that she finds to be logical. Camilla makes one category she calls 'practical', one she calls called 'dressy', and one that is situated in between the two. In the first category, her Palladium boots are her favourites.



Camilla's category, 'practical boots'. The brown ones to the right are riding boots, while the others are for everyday use. She is holding her 'Palladium' boots, since these are the ones that she likes the most.



Camilla's category, 'dressy boots', with two different versions of what she calls 'the Spanish heel': the black ankle boots on the far left in the photo, and the long-legged black and white boots on the far right in the photo. She associates this concept with her temperament, which she feels is decidedly 'Spanish', as well as with the craft and quality of Spanish shoes, which she prefers over Italian ones.

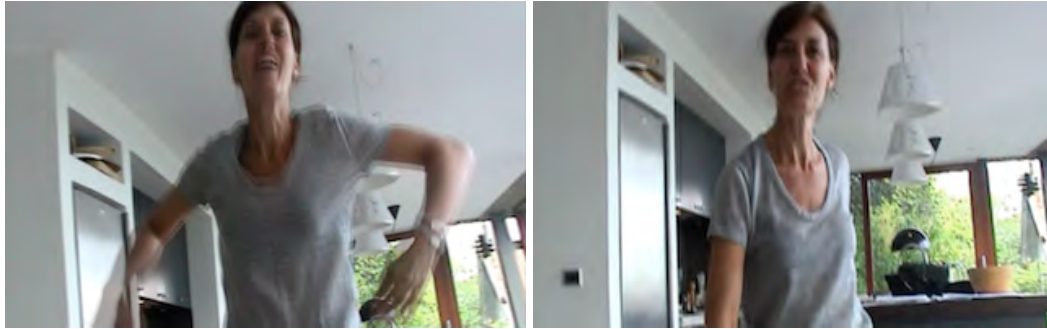
Her 'dressy' boots are ankle boots and high-legged boots of a more refined character than her 'practical' boots. The black ankle boots to the left are favourites as well. She tells me how she fell completely in love with them at first sight, and had to phone her husband immediately to ask for permission to buy them, because they were quite expensive. But she also tells that she actually does not wear them as often as she would like, because she doesn't know how to combine them with her wardrobe. As we speak, she is trying to persuade herself that she will wear them more in the future. I ask her to put them on and to tell me what it is that she likes about them, and she responds:

**It might be because I am kind of petite and delicate-looking, but my temperament is quite the opposite. And perhaps I need to show this, just to get the balance right.**

Since she's finding it a bit difficult to express what she feels, I keep on asking. Then she says:

**I just love to wear such 'clunk'-shoes. Shoes that kind of say: now we're standing firmly on the ground, you know what I mean?**

As she says this to me, she jumps. Her heels make a loud noise, and she is now standing with both feet firmly on the ground. We continue to talk for a while, and she keeps telling me how this physical sensation of 'standing firm' is something that she has appreciated since her early travels in Israel, which marked out a very important and defining period of her life.



Camilla expresses how she likes her boots to make her 'stand firmly on the ground' by actually jumping up and down. As she touches down, with a loud noise from her heels, she's got a big smile on her face.

It also appears that the black ankle boots are closely linked with the long-legged black and white boots that are also in the 'dressy' category, because both pairs of shoes have what she calls a 'Spanish heel'. She refers to the heels on this way because she associates the boots with Spain, because the shape of the heel reminds her of Spanish cowboy-boots or flamenco-shoes. She tells me that when she wears these boots, she dreams of being a cowboy on the pampas who eats raw meat, or a hot-blooded flamenco-dancer. She went as far as to join a flamenco-course at the local village hall, but because dancing flamenco in the cold and dark Danish winter just didn't feel all that 'Spanish', she gave it up. However, having and wearing these shoes make her feel more like a whole person, because they link her outer 'pretty' and 'petite' appearance with her inner and more hot-blooded temper.

### *Femininity*

Like Pia, it is only within recent years that Camilla has learned to wear more ladylike, dressy shoes. She expresses this already as she is busy surveying the whole collection at the beginning of the session. Just by looking, Camilla and I agree that there are more 'feminine' shoes in the newest part of her collection.



Camilla's latest purchases. Here are most of her more 'ladylike' shoes. Her favourites are the brown sandals with straps, and the yellow wedges. She never wears the red shoes that she received as a gift from a friend, and she also never wears the three pairs of 2hand shoes that are sequenced fifth, sixth and seventh from the left. The red shoes do not match her taste and her wardrobe, and the 2Hand shoes are all too uncomfortable to wear.

We discuss her ambivalence towards feminine shoes on several occasions during the session. At one point, she tells me an anecdote about a boyfriend she had who wanted her to look more feminine: for this reason, he persuaded her to buy a pair of peep-toe stilettos:

**I felt too pretty. And I couldn't stand being this person. These little, ridiculous shoes ... I had these blue and white ones with a small red bow, and I really hated them. He thought they were super hot for me, and then I ended up buying them. But I just couldn't stand it, so I never used them.**

She talks about these shoes with genuine disgust in her voice, since wearing them to try and please her boyfriend was obviously a bad experience. On the other hand, she tells me that while she would only wear boots or shoes with a more robust and sturdy character when she was younger, she now wants to wear more dressy and 'chic' shoes. Actually, she would like to look more 'lady-like', all in all. Therefore, she is experimenting not only with shoes, but also with her remaining wardrobe, although without much success. She owns more ladylike dresses, but she can rarely use them, because they simply feel wrong to wear. Still, she sometimes manages to get the balance right, as is the case with her 'favourites' in this category: her yellow wedges:

**These are my favourites, and they are fantastic, because they've got it all: they are cool, refined, fantastic to wear, and they are fun. They match all my clothes, everything. You can wear stockings, and a sock. You can do anything. You can make them cool and pretty, you see?**

It seems to matter a lot to Camilla that she can decide for herself how feminine she looks. The shape, texture and trimmings of these shoes allow some room to make day-to-day decisions related to combining them with more or less feminine outfits. She wears them when she goes out and wants to look attractive, she wears them with what

she calls 'practical' skirts, and she wears them with trousers. In this way, she can turn the dial up and down when it comes to her feminine side, when and if she decides to do so. And this gets her to relax.



Camilla's favourite dressy shoes: on the right, behind her, are her favourite yellow wedges, with the soft and comfortable cork heels. To her right and (also) on her feet, are her second- and third-best favourites in this 'dressy shoes' category: both sandals with brown leather. All of the 'favourites' have straps and buckles of a very robust design. Even if the pair she is wearing is quite feminine in relation to her general taste, she accepts them because they are bendable in the front, with the result that they are *very* comfortable to wear.

### *The feel of shoes*

In her collection of dressy shoes, there are shoes she *never* wears. She actually really likes the red shoes she received as a gift from a friend, but they chafe her feet. One day, she purchased three pairs of 2Hand shoes in a local shop, but they are far too uncomfortable for her taste. These shoes represent the very few passive shoes in Camilla's collection; they all share the characteristics that she got them as gifts, inherited them, or purchased them very cheaply. At one point during the session, she says:

**I can tell that the shoes I had purchased, or that I purchase 2Hand, just don't fit in, right?**

Camilla claims that she can tell whether a shoe is comfortable to wear just by looking at it. She is very confident when she purchases new shoes, and has very few passive shoes like these in her collection. Actually, she still uses all of her shoes, even the ones that are more than 15 years old. She describes how she takes very good care to get what she wants when she is out shopping for shoes. After doing this, she maintains and stores the



shoes very carefully. She is very sensitive to comfort, and she even has three pairs of shoes that are so soft that she mostly wears them with bare feet. As a result, her toes are making marks in the leather when she wears them again and again. When I look at all of her shoes, I notice that she has no 'pointy' shoes at all. All of her shoes' toes have a rounded shape that leaves room for the natural shape of her feet.



Three pairs of Camilla's shoes that she often wears without stockings, because they are so soft that she doesn't have to: her Puma sneakers, for city walking; her red ballerinas; and her brown ankle boots with straps. In all of these shoes, marks of her toes are showing in the leather.

### *The sound of shoes*

As I talk to Camilla about her very favourite shoes, there is a feature that re-occurs a couple of times that has to do with *sound*: a 'Spanish heel' is a heel that makes the same noise she used to love when she was a child, the noise of hard-heeled shoes that squeezes down the gravel on the pavement outside of her window. She used to wish she would own such shoes one day. And now she does! Because the heel reminds her of the heel on a flamenco shoe, she also associates them with the sound of flamenco dancing, which is a very positive thing for her. On her favourite 'dressy shoes', there are buckles that make a ringing sound when she walks. When we talk about the buckles, she mentions how she used to have a pair of red ballerina sandals, with buckles that made a ringing sound. Still today, she continues to associate this sound with being pretty. She believes that this might be why all of her favourite ladylike shoes have buckles.

To sum it up, Camilla resembles Pia in some respects, including the biographical fact that she has been struggling to find feminine, ladylike shoes that would match her idea of self – and that it's only in her more mature years that she is starting to succeed in this.



In other respects, however, she is very different. She is very controlled and knowledgeable about what she wants when she purchases new shoes, which appears to have something to do not only with her income, but also with how she is as a person.

## **Thomas**

Thomas is 51 years old and lives in a house in Copenhagen together with his wife and 3 children. He is a photographer and a web-site producer. He is also a volunteer at a café for homeless people. He owns 17 pairs of shoes. When we arrive at his house, he tells us about the large-scale renovation project that he has been carrying out on his house over the course of recent years, a house that he and his wife bought a few years ago. He stores his shoes in a wardrobe closet in a small room next to the kitchen, and lines them up neatly, in two rows, as we speak. Thomas' shoe collection is very basic and functional. There are practical winter boots and wellies, dressy shoes for festive or more formal occasions, shoes for exercising and for working in the house, and shoes for going to work. Besides this, there is a pair of flip-floppers, slippers, and a 'hate gift' - a pair of fluorescent orange shoes in canvas.



Thomas' complete shoe collection. It is very basic and very functional, with just what he needs. There are wellies and winter boots, clip-clappers, hjemmesko, shoes for exercise, formal dressy shoes, and shoes for working. The only pair of shoes that deviates is the pair of neon-orange canvas shoes, but these shoes are actually a 'hate-gift' that he got from his friends, which he stores but never uses.

### *Dream versus reality*

The first thing that I notice are the five pairs of Asics trainers. They range from a completely unworn pair to a pair that is completely worn out. Thomas tells us that after some experimentation, he settled on these as being the very best trainers he could find. He believes they fit 'as if they were cast', unlike other brands and models. Therefore, he uses them for basically everything in his daily routines. During his renovation project, he has worn these shoes every day, even though he originally purchased them for the purpose of doing exercise. But, as he tells us, he lost 10 kilogrammes just by carrying materials for working on the house, so there has been no need for exercise during this period. Similarly, there has been no room for any kind of extravagance. As he tells us, what he stores in his collection is very basic: because he has been using all of his time negotiating with the people working on his house, and because he has spent all of his money paying for the worker's hourly wages and the materials, he has not found the time or the energy to be very fashion-oriented, or to go shopping. He has only purchased new shoes if a pair was worn out so much that he couldn't use it anymore.



Thomas owns five pairs of Asics trainers, ranging from a pair that is almost completely worn out to a pair that hasn't been worn yet. He has settled on these kinds of trainers as the ones he prefers.

Still, when I ask him to look at his collection and come up with an overall comment, he responds:

**I need to get my act together and go out to buy new shoes. This is definitely not working! It's just too sad. Some of these shoes I couldn't even give to the homeless people I work with. They would ask me what the hell I was thinking.**

Actually, there's something missing, something that he dreams of buying in the near future:

**Well, should it happen that AC/DC would come by, in Sweden, just like they did last year, I just might go out and buy some rocker boots.**

These boots are all about hanging out with his friends, partying and going out to concerts, and not at all about everyday routines, handyman stuff and renovation projects. In his collection, he does have dressy shoes, but these are for more formal occasions or family events, possibly for partying. However, he feels that he is missing out something to wear that indicates 100% leisure time and no work and duties. When I ask him more about what the rocker boots should look like, he says they have to be black leather boots, and preferably short. After the session, he sends me a picture of this pair of boots – of the Western boot brand, 'Sancho', which he found for sale 2Hand on the website 'dba.dk'<sup>2</sup>. However, he did not manage to get them, and still hasn't found such a pair. Even if these boots are kind of flamboyant and deviate from his remaining collection, I am not surprised to hear that he wants boots like this, since we have had a discussion about the rocker boots he used to have as a teenager. Back then, it was in vogue to wear them, even in provincial areas like the place where he was living, so *everybody* had them, and he wasn't standing out in any way.



Thomas dreams of buying Western boots such as these, of the 'Sancho' brand, that he found for sale on a 2Hand website, after he has finished up renovating his house (private photos from dba.dk).

### *Being an invisible man*

Thomas speaks about himself as being a 'not-fashion-conscious kind of guy', and as a person who does not want to look flashy or stand out. When we talk about what kind of shoes he used to wear when he was younger, he mentions the rocker boots he had in the

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<sup>2</sup> Den Blå Avis/The Blue Newspaper, a Danish website for selling and buying used items

7th grade, when he was 13. He tells me that in the metal shop in the school, there was a boy named Michael who came up with the idea of attaching a small piece of steel underneath the heel, so that the boots would make sharp clicking noises when the wearers were walking. There were even boys in his class who had a piece of sulphur attached to the back of the heel, so that they could strike a match and light a cigarette.

While he was talking about all this, I asked him why he only owns two pairs of shoes with a hard heel that can make loud noises. These are his dressy shoes. All the other shoes in the collection have a soft heel. For one thing, he responds: 'sound effects on shoes, that's not my style'. Then again, he adds that he hasn't really given it a thought whatsoever. However, he does mention that on his job as a photographer, 'you have to be able to steal your way into the people'. Especially when he is doing stage-photography at festivals and concerts, he says that 'then you've got to be a little discrete. I don't get on stage to be noticed, but preferably to be invisible'. While he's not very conscious about sounds, he is very aware about visual features like colours. This comes out in the same discussion, when he mentions his orange 'hate-gift' shoes as shoes that he could *never* wear to work. He would attract attention, which is most certainly *not* what he wants. Another thing he mentions is how he needs shoes that can stand firm, so that he will not trip over cables when he is on stage, for example, or attract too much attention.



Thomas' favourite shoes: On the left, his black, sensible shoes, with soft heels that can stand firm, and with which he can be 'invisible' and 'steal his way up on people' as a photographer. On the right, his most worn-out Asics trainers, which also have a soft heel.



Left and in the middle are Thomas' dressy shoes, the only ones in his collection that have hard heels. He will not use these for work. They make too much noise and they are too formal. Thomas wants to make people feel comfortable and safe when he is taking pictures, and he therefore does not want to stand out in any way. The same goes for his 'hate-gift' shoes, the orange canvas shoes. They have a soft heel, but in these, he would be noticed far too much.

As we talk about all this, he tells me that when he was younger, he dreamed of being a famous musician or media star. He was out DJ-ing a lot at bars, and spent several years pursuing an artistic career. Eventually, he left those dreams behind and now he works behind the lens of the camera – and not in front of it. Now, he takes pride in being a more drawn-back person, and he makes good use of this when he is working. All in all, this seems to characterise both Thomas and his shoe collection well, as he explains:

**To be a photographer, you need to establish trust. This is why you should not wear orange shoes. I wouldn't like that, if I was being photographed. I like the job because I hate to be in front, and this is also the reason why I never became a musician. I discovered that wasn't me at all. I would rather be the one in the background.**

To sum it up, Thomas has also been doing some identity work through what he wears on his feet. In spite of his dreams of stardom in his adolescence, he has found that he is actually much more at home with himself and at ease when he is in the background. When we correlate this with his collection of shoes, Graabæk and I find that there is a practicality about Thomas' collection, where all of the objects play particular roles in his life, and how, particularly in relation to his job, design features like soft soles underline his dress practice.

## **Paul**

Paul is 52 years old and lives in Copenhagen with his wife and two daughters. He is a part-time musician and a part-time assistant in an architects' studio. When we arrive and he starts to place his shoe collection on his bed, we realize that he has very few shoes - 10 pairs all in all. What we see before us are basically variations on black pointy ankle boots and black pointy shoes. Apart from that, there are a few deviations, but there is, all in all, a very limited colour palette. He has placed them in such a way that all of his pointy ankle boots and shoes are to the right and represent the oldest part of his collection, while all other kinds of shoes are to the left of his bed, with his newer purchases.



Paul's entire shoe collection, which consists more or less of nineteen-eighties' kinds of ankle boots and pointy shoes (picture on the right - showing his oldest shoes), and newer and more comfortable experiments (picture on the left - his newest shoes).

### *The decade you where you peak - the 80s style*

As we start talking about the collection, Paul tells us that since the 1980s, he has more or less worn the same style of dress. He also tells us that this implies that he has worn black ankle boots and pointy shoes for all types of weather, and is renown among his friends for the very impractical footwear he wears. He also says, about these kinds of shoes, that:

**There is something 1980s about it, like, we all peak and then, well the decade you peak, where you find your style, then you carry this style with you. Like, totally 1980s, that's kind of one's aesthetic.**

Later on, when he talks about his wardrobe, he says:

**It's very essential. When I look at my clothes, it *is* 1980s. It's actually a bit scary. But this is like when you peak as a person. Where you live yourself fully, to the max, and no kids and all that, and where you find out what to do with your life and stuff.**

A '1980s dress style' can be many things, so I ask him more about this. When Paul is out looking for clothes for his wardrobe, he tells us that he's looking for something 'with true girt, something that really rocks and stands out from the crowd and fits just perfectly'. And which 'has something flashy about it, and vamp-like'. At another point in the session he says: 'but I do like to be a flashy dandy sometimes, you know?'. However, when it comes to his footwear, he's actually very conservative. They have to look almost identical. He has never owned a pair of long-legged boots, only ankle boots, and he likes them to have a hard sole. He believes that a hard sole makes masculine and 'here-I-



come' noises, which he likes! All this, he claims, is the reason why he very rarely uses his oldest pairs of shoes. They are too flashy, they've got the wrong colour (not black) and he dislikes the attention he gets when he wears them.



Paul's oldest pairs of shoes. He purchased them approximately 10 years ago, because he felt they had something special. But, as time goes by, he feels compelled to admit that they are perhaps *too* special, which is why he very rarely wears them. He tells us that if these shoes were black, he would have worn them frequently. But they're not. On top of this, his wife hates them. They both share a taste for the 1980s punk style and the colour black, and these shoes simply veer off much too far from these aesthetics.

Apparently, he has opposing demands on what he wears on his feet and the rest of his wardrobe: his footwear has to be dark and basic, and of the same shape, while his wardrobe is where he lives out his more flamboyant side. Because of all this, it's actually difficult to separate the shoes in this category. The differences lie in small details such as a particular stitch on the nose, or small variations in the shape. All in all, however, they look the same.

Paul takes pride in finding his footwear – and in finding his clothes in general - in niche boutiques abroad, and mentions London many times as the place where he goes shopping. He's very particular when it comes to what he likes and dislikes, and once he finds a pair of shoes, he maintains them carefully and tries the best he can to prolong the life of the shoes for as long as he possibly can. He tells us about this while we are talking about his favourites, the pointy black shoes with laces. These are the ones that he prefers to wear when he is on stage singing, or when he goes out partying. They are the pointiest of all his shoes, and he is really sad to see that they are now wearing out. They seem to embrace all of his preferred aesthetics, and to comply with how he likes a shoe to feel.



Paul's favourite shoes of the whole lot. On the inside, they are falling apart, but he is busy trying to prolong their life span by inserting insoles that he cuts with scissors, so that they can fit into the very narrow toes of the shoes. In these shoes, he feels really stylish, and he prefers to wear them when he is dressing up for something special.

### *A matter of comfort*

As can be told by the pictures of his collection, he has started in recent years to experiment with more comfortable shoes. Paul talks about this as we are looking at his winter boots of the 'Wolverines' brand. He tells us that when he wears these boots, he can really tell the difference from what he normally wears.



Paul's latest purchase, his 'Wolverine' boots, about which he says: 'I have reconciled myself to these, and I would never have thought this would work out. Whether this is a question about age or whatever, or the fact that they are in fashion, I don't know. But I really like wearing them, and I can tell that my feet are happy as well.'

His feet are very damaged from all the pointy boots and shoes he has worn over the years, but he is still partial to the aesthetics surrounding his pointy shoes, so there's a clash going on here. He shows us how he finds it hard to like rounded noses on a shoe by delineating a rounded shape with his hand:





Paul shows me the 'wrong' shape of his ankle boots that he calls 'Charlie Chaplin' shoes, because they feel too wide and too long to wear. This is the roundest toe in his collection of 1980s style boots. And this is also the pair that he likes the least.

In the newest part of his collection is also a pair of very expensive sandals, which he claims he has chosen 'not 100% for the looks' but because they feel nice to wear in the summer. At home (and only at home) he wears Birkenstock felt slippers. He has also purchased a pair of Converse All Star canvas sneaker boots, which was not an easy thing for him to do. He says:

**It took many years for me to learn to wear these, and to be able to bear seeing myself wearing them, because they are almost too round in their shape.**

Alongside a few other pairs, these shoes belong to a category of 'other shoes' that deviate from his preferred aesthetics. Most of them share the quality that they have a high level of comfort, and a new thing for Paul is that he wears different footwear in the different seasons. Before, he would wear his 80s' style boots and shoes during heat waves and snow storms, regardless, but now he has a more practical approach. However, he has very specific rules and conditions about when to wear shoes in this category, and he emphasises that they have all been very expensive, and have been picked out very carefully in order to please his taste.

To sum it up, Paul has experienced clashes between his idea of himself as this punk-person, and the fact that he has literally damaged his feet because of this. While he never had to compromise with his looks when he was younger, he is now forced to do so, because his feet are hurting. He then tries to set up very restricted rules for what to wear and when, and rules that govern what kinds of ensembles he can wear for each individual shoe style.

## The process of analysis

### *The designer and the process*

For several reasons, Graabæk's process became very time-consuming and very challenging. For one thing, there was the problem of what she called 'noise'. In her log book, she writes, on March 25, 2012, that:

*"I have found it necessary to scrape away part of the still images, so that the background does not disturb the information. Should I do this again, it is important that I bring with me a neutral background in the form of a white piece of cardboard for the photo sessions".*

I asked her about this, since she had already been photographing all of the shoes against a white background after each session, with the shoes placed on top of on a paper or a white cloth. But apparently, this background was not 'clean' enough for her. What this entailed was that she felt she had to remove the backgrounds of all 92 photos of shoes in the four collections. Since it would be enormously time-consuming to 'clean up' every pair of shoes on Photoshop, this meant that this task alone would require weeks and weeks of visual editing.



Thomas' dressy shoes as Helle Graabæk photographed them during the session (above), and as they looked after she 'cleaned away' the background 'noise' using Photoshop. She went through the same process with all of the shoes in the study.

I would ask her repeatedly why she felt she needed to do this, and she would reply that she needed to 'clean' the photos in order for her to be able to 'act on the material as a designer'. In a Skype conversation we had in January 2012, she told me she didn't want to receive more material from me in the form of literature or in any other form, because she was trying to 'make the material my own'. As we discussed the issue further, I came to understand the difference between our approaches. To me, the 'background' of the photos is actually an important aspect of my way of understanding the situational totality. To me, the backgrounds do not 'disturb the items of information'; it rather the case that they provide me with insights into my encounters with the participants and their shoes. Eventually I understood that we were talking about two kinds of 'information': I was looking for themes that I could understand and theorise, and she was looking for 'themes' in terms of shapes, colours, textures, trimmings and so forth, which she might be able to work with in a design process. All things considered, the amount of 'noise' in the footage elicited the effect that the information seemed chaotic and overwhelming to her.

As we discussed this, and correlated it with her previous experience, Helle would often say that the footage represented 'an information overload', which was difficult for her to overcome and to process. Ordinarily, she would usher in her design process in a much more abstract manner. First, she would have a defined customer, or a company that she worked for, which would provide her with a framework. Second, she would start off with very simple ideas, based on photos, emotions, textures, persons, or the like, which would function as an overall 'atmosphere' or feeling. On the basis of this, she would then proceed to build up her design ideas through visual and material research, prototyping, and keeping a log book, until she had a finished product. This time around, there was no defined customer or consumer segment, and there was not any defined type of product that she needed to produce. And what was most frustrating, she had to process the layers and layers of understandings and codings from the footage before she could turn it into something abstract, which could be freed of its context.

Alongside this process, she would make use of Jordan's 'four pleasures' as grids for understanding various aspects of user experiences. She would make substantial notes for every participant, distinguishing between bodily, cognitive, social and 'inner' levels of attachments she found, based on my transcriptions. On top of this, she would begin to dive into details in the visual material, in order to define particular design features for

each participant. She would go about this by hanging photos on the walls in her studio of shoes in various categories, with captions like 'Camilla's favourite shoes':



Photo from Helle Graabæk's wall during the analytical process, where she would hang up photos of various categories in order to 'be able to act on them as a designer'.

She would then start to work with the concept of 'the collection': the concept that represented both the actual collections we had encountered – the assemblies of shoes purchased over somebody's life time – and a potential, new design collection, which she defines in her log book in the following way:

*"What is a collection:*

*In a classical sense, collections have been used as a way of narrowing down, for example, the colour palette of a design. But throughout the latter years, the concept has been applied more freely and can thereby also define affinities where there are fluctuations between dimensions of shape, colour, expression, and where there are clashes between materials, etc. A collection can thereby consist of individual parts with different ornaments, different surfaces, and different usage of colours, where it becomes weighting between the various parts that constitutes the wholeness, that tells the story or communicates the atmosphere, or which gathers several different stories within a shared framework".*

(Graabæk's log book, March 2012)

In order to identify such 'affinities', she would zoom in on details like 1. number of shoes, 2. age of shoes, 3. colours, 4. materials and surfaces, 5. details, 6. heels, 7. categories. In this way, she could perceive the material through the concept of the 'personae', as put forth by Jordan. In relation to this, she would repeatedly talk about how she wished to 'take the informants seriously'. What she meant by this was that she wanted to implement all of the detailed layers of motives, dreams, emotions, and bodily implications of wearing shoes that we had encountered in the sessions. Once she started moving away from this and doing as she would ordinarily do – i.e. detaching the design material from its original source, and making it her own - she experienced a conflict.

What we ended up doing was to line up characteristic features of each participant and their respective shoe collections. This provided a patently holistic approach to a 'personae'-collection, where the intimate bodily, imaginary and practical reflections of each participant served to define a potential future collection. On top of this, we would have at our disposal detailed visual documentation of characteristic features like shapes, surfaces, trimmings, and kinds of materials. This process was largely aligned with Jordan's suggestions. From our perspective, it functioned as a shared mapping of the design features and quotes that we found particularly interesting. We were basically coding the material together, so as to be able to render it thematic and to analyse it further. Because we had been working in parallel tracks on the bases of our respective fields of practice, both biases were represented in the result. From this phase, we could move on to more abstract and theorised levels of understanding, on the basis of our shared process.

### **Three levels of understanding**

All in all, we established three levels of understanding together, of which the first two were largely based on Jordan's theory and principles in order to look closely at individual users as representatives of consumer segments, through the lens of a holistic

view on people's attachment to design objects. Thus, the first level works as a condensed mapping of each participant and her/his shoe collection. On the second level, we have analysed each of the shoe collections according to the matrix of Jordan's 'four pleasures', trying subsequently to place and define each 'personae' as a consumer segment. On the third and last level of understanding, we have been looking specifically at the perspective of age and ageing, by placing all of the shoes in each collection on a visual time line. As a result of doing this, we caught sight of four different patterns of acquiring, using and discarding shoes.

### *Personae/collection*

This level of understanding was initially chosen for the purpose of developing actual moodboards for a designer to work with, on the basis of each participant. The idea came from the fact that we were being asked to hand over material for use in the second phase of the project, the applied research project, which was to be conducted by a designer, who would quite possibly be Graabæk herself. So, what we were aiming to accomplish was to provide as much hands-on design information as we could, which could be developed through small samples of material, or through types of buckles, stitches or surfaces, through a given colour palette, or through other objects that a designer would normally make use of on a moodboard. We also condensed the characteristic features of each participant's needs, everyday requirements, and dreams. Finally, the idea was to include quotes that interested Graabæk as a designer, because she felt that they evoked a certain atmosphere that she might be able to develop into hands-on design ideas.

'Pia'



Above, Graabæk has zoomed in on details in Pia's many sturdy boots. As can be seen, there is a marked preference for full-grain leather or other types of thicker leather qualities. These features define Pia's comfort zone: what she wears the most.

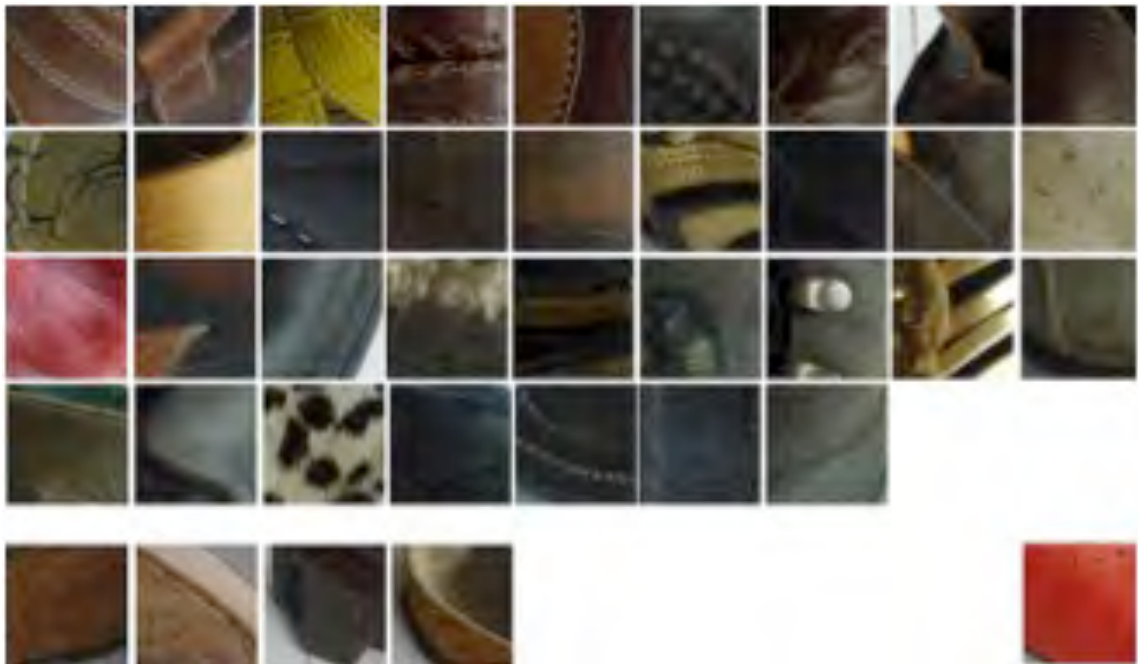
Below is a collection of all of the patent leather surfaces in Pia's collection; nos. 1-3 from left represent what she dreams of wearing but cannot wear, while nos. 4-6 are details from some of her most worn shoes.



Characteristic features, 'Pia':

- *There is a certain weight and a certain sturdy character in the design, so it doesn't become all too 'sweet.'*
- *There is a relatively limited colour palette: mostly brown, slightly green ("I have green eyes") and a few yellow items and surfaces.*
- *The sole is 'silent' because of her work as a midwife - shoes for partying are, however, allowed to make clicking noises.*
- *All sandals must have narrow straps on the ankle, and medium-height heels, such as a plateau.*
- *There could be a concealed height in the more practical shoes like the sneakers.*
- *The quality of craftsmanship is high.*
- *The shoe is of an expensive brand, and/or sold in a store with high-price range and the like.*
- *It is possible to obtain the same model in more than one colour.*
- *The colour red is incorporated so subtly into the design that she feels that she is wearing a sexy red stiletto. But it has to be implemented in a less feminine shoe.*
- *A high priority is assigned to the comfort of the shoe.*

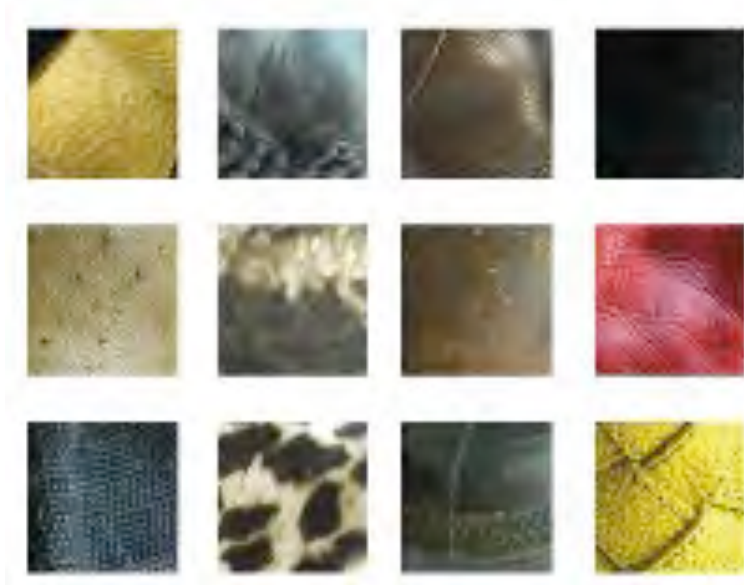
'Camilla'



Above: Design details of Camilla's collection delineating details related to surface, materials, trimmings, laces, etcetera. What Helle Graabæk noticed in particular was how Camilla often preferred decidedly rough stitches, as can be seen on most of the photos reproduced above. Helle Graabæk also documented different kinds of buckles on Camilla's favourite shoes, as well as the extraordinarily soft qualities of the leather in her "2.skin" shoes (i.e., her red ballerina shoes).



Below: Surface features from Camilla's favourite shoes. What Graabæk noticed was the often rough surface on the materials of these shoes, such as the canvas on her sandals (3rd row, on the left), the leather on her dancing shoes, which was perforated so as to make it look less shiny (2nd row, on the left), and the rough character of the leather surface on her yellow wedges (3rd row, on the right).



Key characteristics for 'Camilla':

- *The materials and the fit have to be in focus, and the price must not be too high.*
- *There ought to be a carefully balanced composition in the shoes that predominantly presents a "sturdy" expression: distinct lines, belts, buckles and coarse stitching, rounded toes, and either plateau or wide/square-ish heels.*
- *The leather should have a strong and soft character, full-grain leather or leather with a visible structure.*
- *The shoes should fit tightly around the legs, primarily around the ankles, and can be tightened and adjusted so that they fit perfectly.*
- *The sole is flexible and allows you to "stand firmly".*
- *The product has an expression that both looks and feels comfortable.*
- *The product embodies temperament and edge.*

## 'Thomas'



Helle Graabæk chose a division of materials between leather (above), and other types (below), with which she might be able to work.



Graabæk found Thomas' concept of 'polish-direction' fascinating; here is a close-up picturing the shoe's toes that he prefers. When we spoke with Thomas, he explained that he did not like stitchings across the foot, as it would disturb the 'polish-direction'. Consequently, he had no shoes with such stitchings.

### Key characteristics, 'Thomas':

- *The sole is soft, can provide a firm base of support and makes no noise.*
- *The expression of the design is toned down and discreet.*
- *The colour palette is restricted to black and brown.*
- *The shoe's toe is rounded.*
- *There is no stitching going across the foot.*
- *There is a sharp distinction between everyday shoes and party shoes.*
- *There is a high degree of comfort.*
- *The shoe closes around the foot.*
- *Exceptions: 'rocker boots', in leather that can be polished – cowboy-boot type, and shoes for formal/dressy use, in lighter shades of brown.*

'Paul'



Paul's collection represents a distinct split between black/dark brown leather, and other colours/types of fabric.



A primary design idea for consumers like 'Paul' would, in Graabæk's mind, be to try and develop a comfortable shoe that looked like a non-comfortable one, with all the characteristic features that Paul prefers, such as the ankle-high shell, the elongated shape of the shoe, the black or dark leather, and the hard heel.

Key characteristics, 'Paul':

- *The aesthetics will always be a predominant consideration, over that of comfort*
- *The shape, material and colour refer to the New Wave movement of the 1980s concrete or indirectly manifest in the fact that:*
  - 1 - *the colour palette is limited to black and very dark brown*
  - 2 - *the toe is as sharp as possible, but not too long (not extending beyond the toes)*
  - 3 - *there is a small heel made out of hard material (no rubber soles)*
  - 4 - *use is made of two types: ankle boot without laces or shoe with laces*

- *That it is a product that not everybody can get hold of – difficult access to sales platform (specialty stores in London and Berlin)*

- *That, in addition to this type of shoe, other types of shoes can be implemented in the collection, provided that:*

*1 - they are only used in the home or other enclosed spaces like sports centres*

*2 - there are direct references to the New Wave movement*

*3 – the shoe is recognized by others as being in vogue, or as having a high design quality*

To sum up this level, it heightened our awareness of the exact design details which were commensurate with our participants' wishes for shoes they liked. It fulfilled what we were asked to do in the first place, and we might just as well have stopped here. However, we did not feel that this level of understanding brought justice to our deeper reflections on a holistic design approach. The purpose of transforming, in this way, what we had encountered on a one-to-one basis, and what we had experienced in the interview sessions, also felt unproductive and restricting to Graabæk. There was still a long process that lay ahead before she felt that she could 'make the material her own'. For this reason, we ended up seeing this level of understanding as *part* of the coding process, and continued analysing further.

### *Segments*

Taking Jordan and his concept of 'the four pleasures' very literally, Graabæk and I continued with a mapping out of the four collections. Placing each of the pairs of shoes into a table with the four pleasures was not necessarily an easy thing to do, and we would often discuss back and forth where a shoe belonged. For this reason, there are uncertainties in the tablets, but we do find that they represent the overall approaches to the four participants' collections.

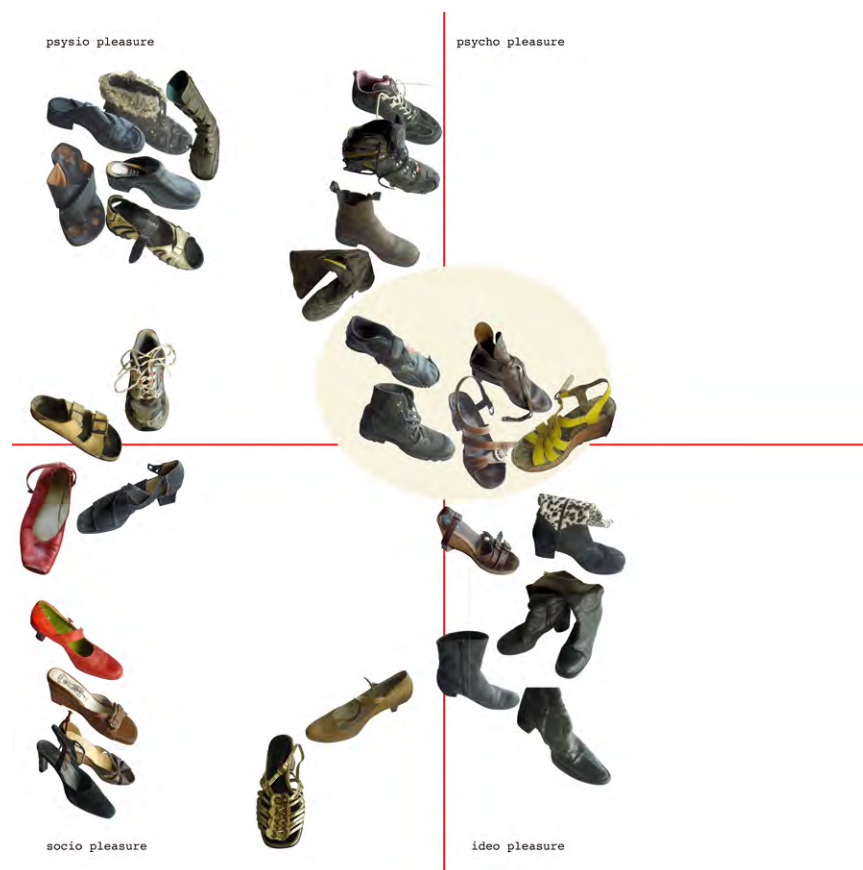
With regard to Pia, we noticed that the level of 'socio pleasure' was defined by shoes of particular brands, purchased in particular shops, which she found possessed a certain level of status. This can be said, for example, about her Marc Jacobs shoes, as well as the

shoes she purchased in the 'Nota Bene' shop in Copenhagen, which is renowned for its high quality and its high priced shoes. In this category, we also placed shoes that had other types of social meaning for her, such as her wedding shoes. On the level of 'physio pleasure', we placed her high comfort shoes. The further a shoe is placed from the centre of the table, the less she finds it aesthetically appealing. On the level of 'ideo pleasure', we placed shoes that she liked because of here personal aesthetics such as her colour preferences, which are expressed in her brown Prada wedges, and in her green Marc Jacobs slippers. The shoes in the centre all express elements of these three levels in combination, such as her favourite Marc Jacobs boots: they are comfortable and give her the 'right' whole body experience; they live up to her demands of status because of the brand name; they are made of full-grain leather; they are brown; and the sole is made out of crepe rubber. In these ways, they match her personal, aesthetic preferences (see below).



Camilla's collection was disposed in a somewhat similar arrangement, but her shoes certainly do not represent the very same values and reflections. First, some of her favourite boots are placed on the level of 'physio pleasure'. We placed them here because she did not find them to be very appealing aesthetically, but appreciated them

on account of other reasons like wearability, comfort and practicality. At the 'socio pleasure' level, we placed the shoes that she holds onto primarily because they remind her of someone - i.e. the golden sandals that she inherited from her mother-in-law, or the red shoes that she received as a gift from a friend, along with the pairs of shoes that she purchased in a 2Hand shop. Most of these shoes are passive. Only her dressy 'dancing shoes' (above the golden sandal) are active, but only for special events. Her relation to the shoes on this level is substantially different from that of Pia's, because she doesn't care about brand names or the place of purchase; instead, she cares about how these shoes connect her to her friends and family. On the level of 'ideo pleasure', we placed her 'Spanish heel' boots. We placed them here because she did not describe them as being particularly comfortable – which is why they cannot be placed at the centre - and because they represent her inner, personal dream world, which appears to be quite disconnected from any social parameters. Again, we placed shoes that satisfy the attributes of all three levels at the centre of the table (see below).



In the case of Thomas, there are quite a few shoes that can be positioned at the 'physio pleasure' level. These would, in his case, be shoes that are comfortable and practical, but do not have aesthetic value for him. He is also utterly disinterested in the level of 'socio



pleasure', but we placed his dressy shoes for parties here, anyhow. At the 'ideo pleasure' level, we placed, among other pairs of shoes, the western boots that he dreams of, since they represent his personal idea of being dressed up, which harks all the way back to his adolescent years. At the centre, we placed shoes that match all three levels, such as his favourite shoes for work, which are comfortable, have a social purpose (i.e. establishing confidence), and reflect personal ideas of self (he wishes he could be an invisible person when he is working) (see below).



Paul's shoes were the easiest ones to place at the various levels, because of his rigid ideas and rules governing what to wear for certain purposes. At the 'physio pleasure' level, we placed his most comfortable shoes, which didn't really please him much, aesthetically speaking. At the 'socio pleasure' level, we placed his 'Charlie Chaplin' boots that he would wear for work but didn't really like. At the 'ideo pleasure' level, we placed, for example, his brown shoes, because they represent his very flamboyant side, but do not reflect other levels. At the centre, we placed all of his favourite rocker boots. While they may not be particularly comfortable, they 'feel right' to wear, and the bodily experience of wearing these boots is what he is looking for - over and over again. They represent social values because they connect him with the punk style of the 1980s - and

thereby with his friends and social circles, and also with his own rock star identity. And they similarly reflect his personal ideas of self, and his personal aesthetic preferences that span across time and changing fashions (see below).

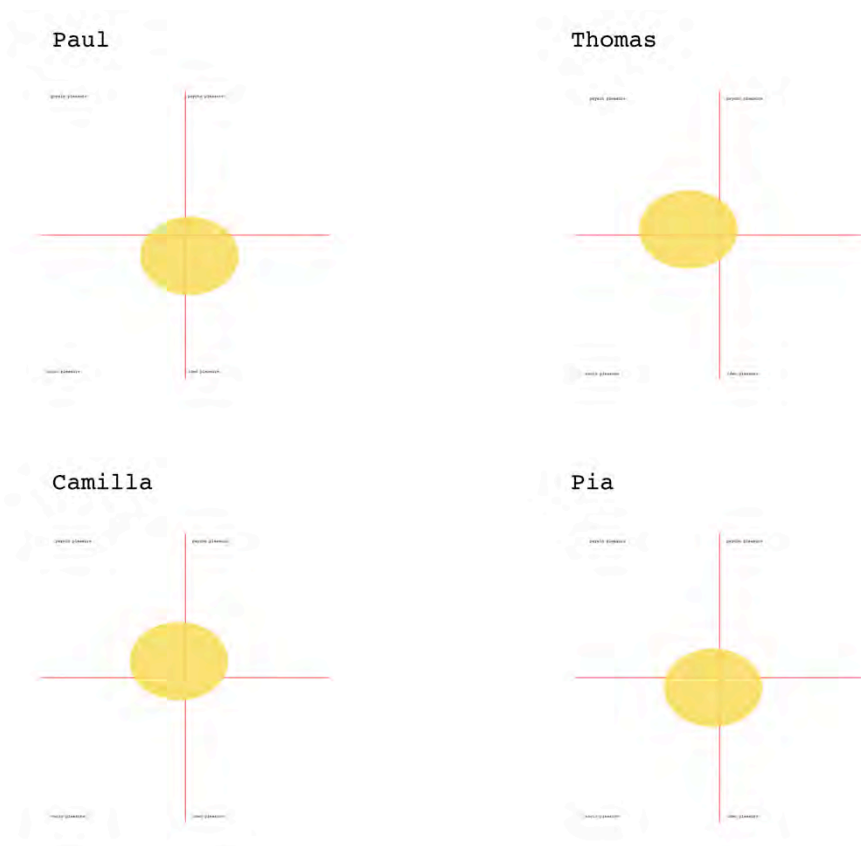


Finally, we removed the shoes from the tables, and took a closer look at the different favourite shoes in each collection, as they were positioned on the figures. Following Jordan, we looked at these positions as indications of motives within various consumer segments, represented by each of the participants as a 'personae'. Here, what is visually displayed is how 'Paul' is a type of consumer who is more into personal aesthetics than he is into comfort, how 'Thomas' represents the opposite tendency, how 'Camilla' resembles 'Thomas', and how 'Pia' is highly affected by social acknowledgement, and interested in quality and comfort.

As such, this table positions each of the personae within different market segments, which can be targeted by designers and industry. However, it will not come as any great surprise that some consumers are very much into comfort, while others value aesthetics as the most important factor in selecting what shoes to buy. As has been argued by Ingold (2004), visual experience has been promoted, through the course of Western



modernity, as being more important than sensory experience, concomitantly relegating comfort to a less important criterion. However, there are companies like ECCO that thrive on providing consumers with shoes with a very high degree of comfort, placing a lesser degree of emphasis on aesthetics. It also cannot come as any surprise that some consumers are intensely preoccupied with a concern about status and brands. In fact, as was already pointed out by Veblen at the turn of the previous century, status has always had a high emphasis in Western fashion (1899). Taken together, the tables reveal that the four 'personae'-segments represent a variety of motives for attachment to shoes that have to do with factors other than visual aesthetics and status (see below).



### *Biographical shoe histories*

At this third level of understanding, we placed each collection in a timeline, reflecting the initial question of each session. We chose to distinguish between active shoes (positioned above the red line), and passive shoes (positioned below the red line), and then, once again, to place them in overall categories that we found could represent each

informant. At this point in our analysis, we were not so concerned with the 'need pleasure' of our participants as we were with motives that provided them with 'pleasure of appreciation', or in fact, with displeasure, since we had learned that categories such as 'shopping mistakes' played an important role in each collection. The upshot of this was that Pia's collection, for example, was divided into one timeline consisting of sandals and dressy shoes, and one of boots. Whereas the other types of footwear that she had mostly for purely practical reasons (wellies for bad weather, trainers for exercise, clogs for the garden, etc.), were not assigned to any timeline. We could have chosen other distinctions, but found that these made sense when it came to developing further our overall understanding of the motives, experiences and dreams of each participant. We looked at this level for two main reasons: first, I was interested in this level because of my previous studies; and second, we had both seen how preferences for certain design features were repeated over time in each collection, and therefore wanted to investigate this aspect more closely. Because the time perspective is not part of Jordan's approach, we wanted to see how this perspective could bring about deeper ways of understanding of our study.

In the case of Pia, we chose to zoom in on her dressy shoes and boots, and leave out the other types. We found that these two categories are the most important to her, while her remaining collection consists mostly of shoes like wellies or trainers that she needs for practical reasons: shoes she doesn't care very much about, but needs to have.



Pia, timeline 1: sandals and dressy shoes, placed in biographical order, and arranged according to active/passive shoes

Looking at the above table, we noticed that all of Pia's red shoes, and many of the more refined and feminine dressy shoes, are passive. We also noticed how Pia has moved from preferring Birkenstock sandals to more feminine shoes, but that all of her active

dressy shoes are green, brown, or toned down in the colour palette. It is also very clear to see, in this table, that she does not have any favourite dressy shoes of a more feminine character until she reaches a more mature age.



Pia, timeline 2: boots, placed in biographical order, and arranged according to active/passive boots.

Some features and patterns are repeated here. Some are different. What appears to be repeated from timeline 1 is that the more refined and 'femininely' designed boots are passive, as can be seen from the latest purchases. Other patterns are rendered visible here, such as her idea of buying doublets: the ankle boots purchased in the late 1980s; the pink and black boots with laces from the mid- 1990s; and the boots of the 'Freye' brand from around 2000. Both Helle Graabæk and I found it interesting that she continues to recapitulate her preferences for the same kinds of boots, with very little variation.

Since Camilla's entire collection is very active, for the most part, we chose to include all of her shoes, but chose also to distinguish between boots and dressy shoes.



Camilla, timeline 1: boots, placed in biographical order, and arranged according to active/passive boots.

Again, in Camilla's timeline, we could see very clearly, when visually displayed, that taste patterns are repeated over and over. As can be observed, very few boots are passive, but this group includes one of her favourite pairs. They are placed here because she finds that it is very difficult to match these boots with her clothes. She feels they

would be appropriate for wearing with skirts, but she almost never wear skirts. For this reason, they are passive.



Camilla, timeline 2: sandals and dressy shoes, placed in biographical order and arranged according to active/passive shoes.

Here, we find quite a few passive shoes. The passive shoes do not, as we see in Pia's case, share any particular features. In some of the cases, they are passive because they have ended up in Camilla's collection as a result of coincidence, when she inherited them from friends or from family members. She has lost interest in the oldest ones, even if she never expresses that they are out of fashion, or says that she prefers her newer shoes. Her recent purchases in this category are the 2Hand shoes which she is not able to wear, because they are too uncomfortable. All in all, her passive shoes are passive for various reasons, but in contrast to Pia's passive shoes, they have little or no value, because she obtained them as presents or bought them very cheaply. As is the case with Pia's timeline, what is visually on display here is that it was only recently that Camilla started to appreciate wearing more 'feminine' shoes.

What is most striking about Thomas' collection is that there are no shoes at all that are older than approximately 10 years. What this indicates is that he doesn't buy new shoes before the old ones are worn out; this jibes with what he had told us. One tendency that runs contrary to this is his penchant for buying trainers before he actually needs them, because he knows these are the ones he wants, so he buys them as soon as he can when he finds them on sale somewhere. He prefers the visually displayed colour palette of blue/white for trainers, black for working shoes and winter boots, and brown/light brown for dressy shoes.



Thomas, timeline 1: the most worn-down part of collection, placed in biographical order and arranged according to active/passive shoes.



Thomas, timeline 2: least worn part of collection, placed in biographical order and arranged according to active/passive shoes.

Here, the oldest shoes are from the mid-2000s. There is, as can be seen, variety in the colour palette, and in the materials. When we correlate this with what he has told us, these shoes are all too 'loud' and defined in their character, which is why he doesn't really like them.

In Paul's case, we decided to place images of 'ghost boots' on his 'mostly worn' timeline, because this is what he tells us he was wearing since the time of his late teenage years/early twenties. Even though there are some striking similarities between the purchase patterns generated by Thomas and Paul, the two men can be respectively characterised by different traces of tendencies showing in their past collections: while Paul has generally always worn the same types of shoes throughout his whole adult life, Thomas has had more types of shoes, such as sailor shoes of the 'Dockside' brand, which he used to wear in the 1980s-1990s, and western boots, of which he has owned several pairs since his teenage years.



Paul, timeline 1: mostly worn shoes, placed in biographical order and arranged according to active/passive shoes.



Paul, timeline 2: 'other shoes', placed in biographical order, and arranged according to active/passive shoes.

Again, what becomes rendered visual is that Paul only recently started experimenting with more comfortable alternatives. While they are all active shoes in his wardrobe, with the exception of the brown shoes that are positioned below the red line, Paul observes his own very rigid rules for when and how to use them, and what to combine them with.

This level of analysis could lead to generating more perspectives. First of all, it provides an insight into patterns of consumption for each informant. From Pia's impulsive shopping to Thomas' very basic and utilitarian approach to new purchases, there is certainly a distinctive variation to be found, variation, that could help illuminate why we shop for new things. Another reading offers an insight into not only *why* we shop, but also, *what we are looking for* when we shop. Seen in this light, the four participants each come to represent consumption patterns that relate to their past, present and future ideas of self. These ideas may or may not reflect larger consumer movements that can be targeted, but that issue is not a driver in this project.

### *Final summation of shared analysis*

What is important at all three levels of analysis is that there are a diversity and a repetition of patterns that cannot be explained by fashion logics alone. Nor can they be explained through utilitarian motives only. These patterns emerge through a holistic experience of each individual, and have to do with all of Jordan's levels of pleasure, as well as with how we develop taste patterns over time.

In terms of gender differences, the project reflects much of the scholarly writing about gender and fashion in the sense that the male participants had few shoes while the women had much larger collections. Pia, especially, lives up to the idea that women like to shop (a lot). Thomas, on the other hand, lives up to the classic ideals of menswear, because he has very few shoes, all of which appear to match basic needs and formal etiquettes in his social context. While such gender divides are rendered visible in this study, my previous studies actually contradict this understanding - if we consider, in isolation, an informant like Pelle, we can see that he owns many more shoes than Pia does, that he takes pleasure in shopping, and that he has an impressive amount of clothes in his wardrobe. I would argue, moreover, that Camilla shops according to menswear ideals, much like Thomas, because she never makes impulsive purchases, and uses basically all of her shoes until they are worn out. Paul, on the other hand, has no trouble with embracing the logics of fashion in his wardrobe, as long as they match the subcultural style that he prefers.

All things considered, I find it very difficult to glimpse any decidedly gendered biases on the basis of these few studies. What I see as being important in the analyses is not necessarily how the four participants differ, but how - in some ways - they are doing *exactly the same thing*. As in the previous studies, a pattern emerges that is driven by preferences that were developed in people's youth, on which they build and add throughout the course of their lives. What affect their taste patterns, for the most part, are parameters like whole-body sensory experiences, life changes related to new jobs, re-locations, and/or having kids, and often highly personal preferences for textures, styles, shapes and colours, which may or may not be related to their past.

What I find perhaps most interesting in this study - as well as in the previous studies - is how inner dream worlds and fantasies are not the same as the idealised dream world

seen in fashion imagery. To be 'adorned in dreams' is not only to make our own versions of what we see in magazines or movies, but to dress according to our own, private imagination as well. Actually, such inner dreams and fantasies seem to be very important to all of the informants. One could argue, of course, that most of these ideas stem from Western cultural history, such as the way Pia's idea about sexy, red stilettos stem from Western notions of sexuality (Steele 2006), and how Camilla's fantasy about being a Spanish cowboy or flamenco dancer stems from ideas in our culture about certain national characteristics. Even Paul's idea of being a sexy, cool man stems from decades of various subcultures going back to the 1960s, which have had rocker boots as a part of the attire. What I find interesting is not the fact that they tap into such culturally shared dreams about certain objects, but *how* they do it. For one thing, they only latch on to objects that reflect their essential ideas of self. When considering Jonas and his Mod style, or Torben and his punk style, I can clearly tell they are using particular dress objects, particular surfaces, shapes, textures and colours as anchoring points, or points of orientation, that help them to create guidelines about what to wear. This is certainly the case when Thomas tells us that he likes 'invisible' shoes because he likes to be standing in the periphery of things, rather than in the centre. Or when Camilla says that she prefers 'Spanish heels' because she is a person with a lot of temperament, who believes that she was born looking more 'sweet' and feminine than she actually feels inside.

### *Method reflections*

Making use of a few, selected texts as a framework for dialogue proved to nurture shared understandings of both field work findings, and of analyses. However, it was my biases as an academic that coloured the project in the sense that we took our point of departure in my tools – in the written text. This was a choice that I made from the outset of the project, because I was being asked to produce a written output, and also because, and perhaps even more importantly, being a non-practitioner myself, I would not venture to move into more practical experiments, such as was done in the study of 'emotional values' of textiles conducted by Bang (2010). However, this choice clearly resulted in my remaining in my own comfort zone, while it was clear that the choice dislodged Graabæk out from hers. This resulted in making her experience the process as being overwhelming and chaotic. All of her experience as a designer urged her to try and



find visual and textual patterns, and to make design-related decisions, such as I had seen the students doing in response to my teaching. Still, we were surprised to see how we often found the same themes, quotes or design details interesting, notwithstanding our different biases.

Initially, we came up with the idea of trying to base four new collections of shoes on the material from our participants. This aim stemmed from the 'top-down' demand to deliver some kind of design material as part our output to be handed further to the second half of the project, which was envisioned as being conducted by Graabæk and members of ECCO's design team. Both Graabæk and I found this to be an appropriate output, given the framework and the timescale of the project. In parallel with this, I was supposed to produce a written text for a shared publication, as well as an academic text, as is represented in this part of my thesis. However, since we had material for moodboards and design briefs for four 'personae' collections, we found that the result did not adequately reflect the girth of our objectives. We also found that transforming our material, in a one-to-one correspondence, into design material was far too restraining from a designer's point of view. If we followed this line of thinking, there would simply be too little latitude for the designer to come up with new design ideas. However, as was done in the students' projects, Helle Graabæk would re-state that the study was providing her with much more 'resonance' of actual consumer experiences, than anything she had tried before. However, once we started moving towards more overall understandings of the material, the chaos started to evaporate. One might argue that this would be true of any process, including the process of academic studying itself. But whereas I have been trained to work with this line of thinking, of finding and of theorising patterns and overall themes, Graabæk is a trained designer. And in this project, she was being severely restrained from making use of her practical experience.

## **Conclusion and perspectives**

This part of the thesis was ushered in with these questions:

- How might 'the wardrobe method' help to generate a more holistic approach to fashion design than what is often the case today?

- How might the project cast back reflections on the way fashion designers work?

- How might the project cast back reflections on the way fashion designers are educated?

I started out by establishing a framework together with my partner in the project, designer Helle Graabæk that was based on both Jordan's understanding of 'emotional design' and Ingold's concept of 'dwelling'. We then conducted four wardrobe sessions with two men and two women, informants who matched my previous sample in terms of their respective professions and their respective ages. After this, we conducted a series of parallel analytic processes, which were based on our shared discussions. We then came together and filtered our understandings through various levels that each provided us with new lines of thinking that could be applied to our informants' dress practices, and then we discussed how this might and could eventually be related to a design process. Altogether, we had now delivered on the task that we were assigned to fulfil: to develop a framework-base upon which a so-called 'applied research project' could be conducted together with the design team at ECCO. However, this never came to be realised, since Helle took on a new position at Design School Kolding which entailed she could not be in a position to complete the second half of project, i.e. the 'applied research project'. Another individual took over, and this part of the project now came to be completely detached from what we had created. It was too complicated for the person in charge to become engaged with our material. Therefore, Graabæk and I never got to explore the framework more deeply, in order to pursue the possibility of it eventually taking form as a 'hands-on' design process. Here, however, I will reflect further on the potentials and limitations of the wardrobe method, as I experienced it throughout the course of the project.

By way of response to the initial and overall research question that I posed for this project, I must answer that there is no doubt that more knowledge about how people interact with dress objects can be a rich and fertile source for designers to work with. However, working with people's experiences of dressing does not necessarily provide more holistic approaches to the design of dress objects. This is indicated in the way that the students at Design School Kolding apply the wardrobe method in much the same

way as they apply any other method they might meet, and then proceed exactly as they normally do: they *design* – based on hunches, intuition, and skills. Traces of lived experience might perchance be transformed into pure abstractions of textures, shapes and surfaces, as we saw in the shoe with the 'skeleton' turned inside out, a conceit that was based on a quote from an old woman. There need not be anything holistic about such a design approach, although it might appeal to people on more levels than the mere visual. However, as was also stated by Helle Graabæk on several occasions, studying 'real' people fuels design with a 'resonance', with traces of actual experiences with dress objects. This means that it can bring forth opportunities for implementing design details that embrace the diverse needs of diverse experiences, which may or may not open up for a more diverse approach to consumer segments like diverse age groups, diverse types of bodies, and diverse types of cultural biases.

As for the subordinate questions, there can be no doubt that the way that this particular research project was framed and conducted caused Graabæk to experience conflicts, conflicts that were of such substantial character that there should definitely be more room for adjustments to be made, in order to more effectively operationalise 'the wardrobe method' in connection with its application to design processes.

Shove et al. have deemed that methods like Jordan's 'four pleasures model' bear the potentials of opening up a space for designers, in which a deeper connection with use experience can be explored. However, they argue that in reality, such methods are most typically used as 'ad-ons' at design studios, where business is carried out as usual. This was what I experienced with most students. As they have been taught and programmed to do, they move directly towards the material as something they can 'act' on, that is, to 'act on' atmospheres, narratives, the kinship between shapes or materials, and clashes that they find interesting. These elements are then taken out of context and transformed into their own aesthetics when they design. Apart from perhaps the student, Louise, no one even questioned whether the wardrobe method might bring forth other reflections in relation to their design practice. These young designers took whatever made sense to them, and materialised this as dress objects, in search of their own, distinctive signature style. I do not necessarily see this as being 'wrong', but it is rather interesting that already at BA-level, young designers are evidently working alongside the taken-for-granted practices in the fashion industry, such as taking any material whatsoever, and transforming it into 'moodboards' of inspiration. This is what they thought they were *supposed* to do. And, yes, they made great designs out of it.

The same was not the case with Graabæk. Being an experienced designer who had been working in the industry for years, she had set up a strong agenda for herself about the project, which was essentially constituted by her aim to 'take the informants seriously', as she put it. However, it became this agenda that prevented her from getting even close to 'acting' on the material as a designer. On the positive side, she claimed in several of our conversations that looking into the lives of people had opened up her eyes to the 'after-life' of dress objects. Like Mads Nørgaard, she expressed how this made her realise how dress objects should and could be made more in coordination with use experience. She came to realise that the 'fashion-life' of a dress object, as Mads formulated this, is merely one life out of many lives that a dress object will become part of during its overall life cycle. Therefore, it needs not only to reflect a capacity to be 'fashionable', according to the latest trends, but also to reflect how people sense wearing it *on their bodies*. What Helle Graabæk was also very fascinated about was how much our informants knew about why they preferred certain dress objects to others - not only in terms of style references, but also in terms of shapes, textures, and trimmings: explanations that were sometimes repeated over and over again. As such, she declared on several occasions that after this, she would never be able to go back to doing 'business as usual'. On the negative side, what became clear to me was how a project like this has to move far beyond text in the use of dialogic tools. Because I was the head of the project, I was the one who was responsible for choosing text to be the shared framing device. Notwithstanding the fact that would claim that this project moved closer to design features and the material capacities of dress objects than the student projects described above, this was not sufficient for me. This 'closeness' was due by and large to Helle Graabæk's distinctive sensibility, which was based on her skills and experience. What I could tell, however, was that she never even managed to draw near to a situation where she could have 'acted' on the impetus informed by these skills. And this was because of all the chaotic 'noise' that I had pushed her to engage with. Based on this, I am forced to conclude that 'the wardrobe method' might just hold an important key to conjoining the production and consumption of dress objects, but in relation to design processes, it really does have to be adjusted to meet the skills of the designer. This means that if I were to do it all over again, I would try to move more into the workshop-format of the design:lab, as has been described by Binder & Brandt (2008), and as has been tried out by i.e. Bang (2011), since this format has been developed specifically for the purpose of *exploring design processes through research*.

Looking again at this part of the thesis, what appears to be rather paradoxical is that Helle Graabæk and I ended up swapping the texts that we had brought along with us as dialogic tools. What I mean to say by this is that I, being positioned between user-ethnography and 'innovative methods', inevitably see everything in terms of patterns and themes that can be extracted and analysed through words. As such, Jordan's concept of the 'four pleasures', which Graabæk brought with her into the project could be seen as just another academic text which would presumably strengthen my understanding of 'favourites'. I might even have applied it to my sartorial systems model, showing how each system could be filtered through Jordan's concept. And this might have served to display how there are specific values behind feelings of comfort, of sociality, of ideals and of aesthetic preferences, or even behind feelings of usability, which could enlighten my own framework even further. And in a sense, this is, in some respects, just what I did: for example, I showed how the virtue of being 'authentic' and staying true to one's membership of a countercultural movement had 'hands-on effects' on the way Paul dealt with issues like style or comfort. And how, on the other hand, values that are inherent in the system of 'fashion' made Pia dream of sexy, fashionable shoes that she was not able to wear in reality. Conversely, Ingold's text on shoes and 'dwelling', which I chose to import into our project, appeared to speak more directly to Graabæk. Across all of the reflective layers of our analysis, Ingold's text has been guiding our focus on the sensory experience of dressing, which brought about a sense of proximity to the material capacities of design that seemed to be much more relevant for her as a designer.

In this way, I see a way forward through exploring this direction further. While it might not be the informants themselves who could push my wardrobe method closer to a design process, the very idea of sensory anchoring might very well be a good starting point. As such, I see Riisberg's experiments with design and use experience as something to build on in the future (Riisberg & Bang 2014). Riisberg has built her research design on the principle's of Fletcher's 'craft of use', which has been derived from the *local wisdom* project (Fletcher 2014). Here, Fletcher has documented how people in various parts of the world interact with dress objects, in particular those that could be defined as 'favourites'. In a collaborative project with Design School Kolding that was affiliated with *local wisdom*, Fletcher & Riisberg facilitated a workshop with fashion design students that was based on use experience. This resulted in, among other things, a project about bicycling, since it appeared that riding a bicycle implicates some rather particular problems in relation to dress. When the students designed an ensemble to answer these problems, they were relating quite directly to use practice in

their design processes. In the wake of the *local wisdom* project, Riisberg has taken these ideas further. In collaboration with the designer, Laura Locher, Riisberg has showed how the high school students who make up her sample, when put through certain restrictions like being blindfolded, respond to sensory aspects of dressing that they have not 'learned' through the fashion system as it functions today. As things stand, they are intensively absorbed in buying new and fashionable dress objects that correspond with the trends. Through this practice, they are educated as consumers not to question the quality of the materials or the fit of dress: they have learned to focus more or less solely on the *look*, rather than the *feel*, of dress design. What Riisberg does is, first and foremost, to get out and talk with these young people about their wardrobes. As I am doing with my sample, she is mapping out their taste patterns, and getting to know their everyday concerns and dreams. After this, they are exposed to high-quality materials in specially designed dress objects throughout the course of project, and then they report back to her through 'mobile probes' and interviews, much in line with the method I was applying in the Nørgaard project. In this way, Riisberg achieves what I failed to accomplish here: she is successfully using the wardrobe method as a dialogic tool that is situated between use experience and design process. And moreover, she manages to use people's own sensory experience of dress as the driver for a more balanced relation between the production and consumption of dress.

# **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

I initially started out by posing the question of how my personal approach to the wardrobe method might contribute to a deeper understanding of dress practice, and to bringing about a more 'tight fit' between the production and the consumption of dress objects. In part I, I operationalised my explanatory frameworks of 'sartorial systems' and 'sensory anchoring' through developing a methodology that was based on the principles of 'clustering' and 'wardrobe biographies'. I conducted a series of wardrobe sessions as a set of 'open moments', together with two informants, in order to make method adjustments. In my concluding chapter, I showed how the sartorial systems of 'pop- and counter-culture' and 'menswear/tailoring' actually played a much more important role for my informants than did the sartorial system of 'fashion'. I also showed how sensory and relational aspects of dressing are developed over time, thus connecting the past, present and future dress practices of my informants, in the sense that past wardrobes still played a highly important role in their selection processes. In part II, I conducted a new series of wardrobe sessions, this time around with three informants, in a collaborative project with the Danish designer, Mads Nørgaard. In a follow-the-object process, each one of the informants was provided with two designs chosen from Nørgaard's AW2011 collection. After a 5-month period, I returned to see how these designs had been appropriated in the personal wardrobes of the informants. In my concluding chapter, I showed that there is a huge discrepancy between the way a fashion company such as Mads Nørgaard's revolves around the skill, codes and practices of the sartorial system of 'fashion', and the way in which people interact with dress objects in their wardrobes. This discrepancy addresses not only issues of temporality, but also issues of value-creation: the 'meaning' of the Mads Nørgaard designs were simply transformed, since they transcended being part of a brand to being part of people's wardrobes. In part III, I conducted, together with designer Helle Graabæk, a series of wardrobe sessions that revolved around shoes. Whereas the Nørgaard project was highly focused on my explanatory models of 'sartorial systems' and 'sensory anchoring', this project was more closely attached to my methodology, inasmuch as it became a connecting junction between my own practice as a researcher and Graabæk's practice as a designer. Thus, both the field work and the analysis were conducted in parallel tracks, where Graabæk moved back and forth between being my partner and being an object of study. In my concluding chapter, I ended up acknowledging that in order to bridge use practice and design process, my personal approach to the wardrobe method is, in its current form, too far removed from designerly practices. I recognised that a 'research through practice' approach might offer potentials that have not been explored within this thesis.



### *Conclusions and contributions*

I believe that throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated how a heightened focus on the temporal and sensory aspects of people's dress practice can pose serious questions about the whole way that scholars and the industry have approached the matter through the concept of 'fashion'. I believe that by pursuing a currently needed 'Copernican turn', with an emphasis placed on the rich and faceted things that are going on in people's everyday dress practices, I contribute toward opening up a general climate of understanding. Until now, it seems as if the logics of the sartorial system of 'fashion' have been lying around as 'taken-for-granted' explanations of dress practice, and in particular, as 'taken-for-granted' biases of the fashion industry, and in the education of fashion designers. I believe that what I am contributing with here is a glimpse of what is really going on in people's wardrobes, an approach that questions these logics and explanations, and indeed shows that they are limited, restrictive, and far from being sufficient. Should the questions posed here gain force and start to make an impact on industry practices, this would come to have very far-reaching consequences. Imagine how the fashion industry might be structured if it were to follow, not the logics and tidal waves of fashion, but the slower pace of the wardrobe. To begin with, would this then implicate that at the design schools, the fashion departments would be reduced to being subsidiary to the dress design departments? Or even to courses in curriculum, amongst many others? And then, what about current practices in the fashion industry that are all bound up with values of change and newness? Could it be so that a whole new sector could potentially be developed that would be more compatible with the slower pace of people's dress style? And what would that look like? How would such sector be communicated, disseminated, and sold? Such issues have such vast perspectives that they cannot be addressed cursorily here. But in my mind, they need to be addressed in the future. And they need to be addressed with a point of departure taken in *the wardrobe*.

### *Potentials and limitations*

In terms of developing new modes of understanding, my particular approach to wardrobe research has its potentials and limitations. First of all, I want to address how I

regard my approach as 'limited'. In relation to my sartorial systems model, there are surely samples and sectors in the industry that are much more homogeneous than what I have presented here. Had I been studying adolescent females in urban environments, I am quite certain that I would have found a much higher modicum of attention paid to the system of 'fashion', whereas the other sartorial systems would be far less engaged, if at all, in their dress practice. The same would probably be the case in most of the high street sector, which is, after all, in so many ways, epitomising the skills, codes and practices of the fashion system. Basing their entire approach to business on the ability to catch hold of and produce new trends, continuously, it can hardly be expected that there would be much engagement with the more 'slow' systems. On the opposite side of the scale, had I found a sample of people who were far less conscious about their appearance than were my 'free agents', I might have found it hard to find much engagement at all with 'fashion' or pop- and counterculture. And the same thing might have been true of that sector of the fashion industry which provides such sample informants with their dress. What I am thinking about here are dress styles such as workwear that only engage to a very minor extent with trends, and if at all, then only to very long-lasting ones such as the placement of the waistline, the length of jackets, etc. In this sense, there has indeed been a very 'tight fit', in terms of taste, among the sample I have studied, the fashion company I have been working with, and the designer I was collaborating with. To many people, the men and women I have studied can certainly be said to be highly aware of their own appearance. They are informed about high status designer brands, and many of them use this consciously to position themselves socially. Not only with respect to others, but also with respect to themselves, in the sense that the status of the brand means a lot to them, in terms of self-esteem. This could be said about, particularly, Pelle and Paul, who prefer to wear brands that are limited in access. For example, Pelle once wore Paul Smith, but now he doesn't, because the brand has become too accessible on the Danish market. Therefore, he has turned to brands like Edwin, a Japanese designer line, when he purchases new jeans. Paul is also extremely fashion-conscious, and prefers to buy dress objects when he's abroad, especially when he's in London, which is the epicentre for his favourite dress style, punk. And, of course, there's Pia, who only purchases shoes offered by high-status designer brands that are known to be pricy and fashionable, such as Marc Jacobs. Most of my sample is very occupied with dress styles from pop- and counter-culture, dress styles that they wore in their youth. These styles seem to represent a certain kind of anchoring of self, on which they have based and built up their taste preferences. In other samples, this mode of engagement might not have been found at all. In particular, the love and the dedication to certain

music genres, as described by Torben, Jonas and Michael, might not be wholly representable for people of their own age group and setting, and even less for other types of males. Finally, I am aware that my sample is Danish, and that in other countries or in other parts of the world, there are external demands for appropriate dress that are far different than those that prevail in Denmark. First and foremost, I could see this as correlative with the very informal culture found at Danish workplaces, which doesn't even correspond with what would typically be experienced in countries as near to us as England, Holland or Germany. Here, I am assuming that the sartorial system of menswear/tailoring would be far more important, since dress codes are decidedly more formal in large sections of Europe, as well as in the rest of the world. Conversely, there might be very similar patterns of dressing in other Scandinavian countries largely due to the flat and non-hierarchical societal structure of these welfare states.

In relation to my concept of 'sensory anchoring', it is clear that it might not make much sense if the sample were to represent very young people, who are going through the phase of discovering their dress preferences. In such a case, it might afford an opportunity to look at coherences between their own taste patterns and that of their parents. This is something that occurred to me while Graabæk and I were interviewing Pia. When the wardrobe session was nearly concluded, Pia started to talk about her daughters' shoe collections. She was telling us that they often borrow her shoes, and that they buy many shoes that mirror her own. What was so striking was that she not only mentioned matters of taste, but also sensory matters, such as the fact that her daughters look a lot like she did when she was young, and that they mimic the way she negotiates her femininity. As such, it might be very interesting to study how sensory anchoring is passed along between generations in families. Another interesting aspect is the way that I have applied Shove et al.'s model of 'having' and 'doing', and how I relate this to my engagement with the Nørgaard brand, and to my engagement with Graabæk as a designer. Here, I have considered it a 'plus' that there's a very 'tight fit' between the practices of my informants, and the design approach of my collaborative partners. On account of this fortunate correspondence of taste and reference points, it has been possible to better align the 'favourites' of the sample with the approach to 'favourites' from the designers. Thus, neither Nørgaard nor Graabæk found substantial problems in engaging directly with the dress objects that the informants stored in their wardrobes. This would have been very different had there been a larger gap between sample and collaborative partners: if, for instance, I was collaborating with a sample of people who would never wear clothing designed by Mads Nørgaard, or people who felt a sense of

alienation about Helle Graabæk's approach to design. Or conversely, if the designers I was working with could not relate at all to my sample. This would have given rise to gaps between the 'having' of the designers (i.e. the dress objects they make) and 'having' of the informants (i.e. the dress objects they store), and their respective practices related to the aspect of 'doing'. If I, therefore, engage, at some point in the future, in the concept of sensory anchoring to a completely different sample or a different industry sector, I would surely have to make adjustments in my research design, especially because, ultimately, the taste patterns of both sample and designers in this thesis, in many ways, reflect my own. Thereby, I have enjoyed the luxury of being 'free' from problems related to translating unfamiliar underlying assumptions and values of dress practice and design throughout the whole project, but this homogeneity would most certainly have come to be challenged if I had been working in a less congenial setting.

As for the limitations of the clustering method I have applied, I have already explained that it actually appeals more to my academic research objectives of establishing theoretical, explanatory frameworks, than it does to design processes. And that, in order to connect in a more effective and satisfying way with designers and their work processes, I would need to move part of my method beyond text, and closer to the material capacities of design, such Fletcher & Riisberg are doing.

However, I do see the ideas behind my thesis as contributing to potentials and future perspectives. First and foremost, in relation to scholarly understandings of dress practice, I feel strongly that there is a need to break away from the hegemony of 'fashion' as the overall explanatory framework. I am aware that trends and fashions can be found anywhere, even in stabile settings, as I am aware that it might be difficult to weed out the skills, codes and practices of 'fashion' in any sartorial system. This, in my mind, is due to the fact that this system has been so very dominant, largely because it mirrors the socio-economic structure of Western society. However, there are a good many things that point to a future scenario where this structure will need to be changed, or will be changed by external factors. Just imagine, if the whole positivist idea of growth is largely left behind in favour of circular economy structures, 'fashion', as we know it today, might not be such a dominant system in the future. There will simply be a need to rethink inherent values and practices on which the fashion industry operates today. Furthermore, if the new 'tiger economies' of the East, or even other continents like Africa, come to dominate the West in terms of economic power, there might be inherent values and practices at play that do not correspond with the system of (Western)

'fashion' at all. And in all likelihood, there will be other sartorial systems at play that are unfamiliar to the West, which will then come to play a more dominant role. Most likely, this will transpire in the form of hybrids, as can be seen in the way that Afro-American immigrants have merged Western and African approaches to dressing (i.e. the zoot suiters and the hip-hop style), and in the way that Japanese designers have merged Western and Japanese approaches to dress, as could be spotted in the so-called 'Japanese Revolution' in Paris. I am sure that, in many respects, there is room for improvement in my very simplistic model. For my own part, I consider my explanatory framework of 'sartorial systems' to be a very rough grid, through which it becomes possible to displace the fashion system in favour of other systems; as a 'cultural script' of huge importance, but one that cannot explain everything. What I believe is being accomplished by this move is a highlighting of the parameters affecting dress practice in the periphery of 'fashion', as opposed to the practices in the centre of fashion, which has been defined and described by so many others.

When it comes to my model of 'sensory anchoring', I believe that it, too, contributes to an understanding of dress practice which, in line with Shove et al., highlights how everyday processes happen through time and place. What this implicates is, once again, a distancing from the inherent skills, codes and practices of 'fashion', in the sense that I have seen my informants corresponding not only with the 'new', but actually - and much more profoundly - with the 'old'. And as I have been advocating throughout the entire thesis, I see my informants engaging with their practice in ever-evolving, slow cycles of repetition and adjustments, as opposed to a striving for newness and change. Relating this again to Shove et al.'s model of 'having' and 'doing', I regard this as being very closely connected with the issue of seduction, which is so intrinsically embedded in the fashion system: how particular 'fashionable' design features become objects of desire, by which people are seduced. And, as such, become 'adorned in dreams', as Wilson describes it. The problem with this, when I consider the dress practice of my informants, is that they are *not* seduced by dress objects simply because they are in fashion. They are seduced and attracted to certain objects because they believe these articles can help them towards becoming future, and better, versions of themselves. As such, it is their own ideas about their own future dress practice that reflect their 'image of having'. Not fashion trends! In fact, this aspect of my research might be the most important one to fashion companies like Mads Nørgaard's.

When it comes to my overall methodology of using 'wardrobe biographies' and 'clustering', I do believe that it brought my research and my informants closer to the material capacities of their wardrobes, and to the sensory aspects of their interaction with them. The idea is very simple and could be elaborated for purposes of driving a future research project in new directions. Again, had I been working with a very young sample, it might not have made much sense to ask them to prepare and present a wardrobe biography. At least, it would not have been possible to trace taste patterns back in time in the same way that I have been able to do here. On the other hand, I do believe that by making adjustments in the clustering method, it would be possible to have a more direct dialogue with designers and their work processes - quite simply because I borrowed the method from their own practice. However, this would require me, in my capacity of being a researcher, to work more in the direction of *applied research* or *research through design*, within the field of design research, as defined by Frankel & Racine (2010), than to remain in the area of *basic research* or *research about design*. Naturally, this would have to take place within the framework of so-called 'practice-led' research, working together with trained designers or design students. By 'practice-led', I am referring to the definition posited by Archer of:

*"systemic enquiry conducted through the medium of practical action; calculated to devise or test new, or newly imported, information, ideas, forms or procedures and generate communicable knowledge"*

(Archer 1995:11 in Frankel & Racine 2010)

#### *Future areas for exploration*

I can envision several scenarios in which my understanding of dress practice might very well be developed further in the future. As I see it, there are two main paths I might choose to pursue after this project, which could even be combined. Both represent where my heart lies; both represent my own 'favourite' research issues.

As a first path, I could easily see myself engaged in a project that would further address, from the vantage point of a design research approach, the connection between the production and the consumption of dress objects. Others, such as Fletcher (2008/2014), Busch (2008/2009), and Riisberg & Bang (2014), have paved the way for such projects,

as a result of their becoming critically engaged with this kind of research objective. What I could imagine doing lends itself to being divided into two, overall approaches:

The first of these would be a critical design approach that falls in line with Dunne & Raby's concept of *Design Noir*:

*"Like in Film Noir, the emphasis would be on existentialism. Imagine objects that generate 'existential moments' - a dilemma, for instance - which they would stage or dramatise. These objects would not help people to adapt to existing social, cultural and political values. Instead, the product would force a decision onto the user, revealing how limited choices are usually hard-wired into products for us.*

[...]

*Critical design is related to haute couture, concept cars, design propaganda, and visions of the future, but its purpose is not to present the dreams of industry, attract new business, anticipate new trends or test the market. Its purpose is to stimulate discussion and debate amongst designers, industry and the public."*

(Dunne & Raby 2001:270+271)

Such an approach would reflect Busch's call for a 'Copernican Revolution' with an 'arm's length' to the fashion industry, in which design researchers could conduct experiments where they question their own profession and the way that it connects to use experience. Being a part of such research project would enable me to address societal challenges like sustainability, gender issues, ethnic issues, or other existential questions which trouble and give rise to 'dressing dilemmas' for the individual wearer. Here, I see how my explanatory frameworks of 'sartorial systems' and 'sensory anchoring' could work as fuel for a line of thinking that would be detached from the dreams and needs of industry, while simultaneously reflecting and commenting on the societal setting and agendas of industry.

A second approach in relation to this path of enquiry would be to engage even more intimately with the fashion industry in the shape of collaborative projects such as the one I carried out with Mads Nørgaard. By and large, this could involve pursuing the objective of establishing a greater sense of awareness in the industry about the 'after-life' of dress objects, in which brand values are transformed and appropriated into the values engaged by the wearer. Again, my research design would have to be adjusted if I were to turn my efforts towards working with parts of the fashion industry sector other

than the 'design-led', medium price sector that constitutes the one represented here. And all the more so, seeing as a practice-led program would require experiments along the lines of the design:lab idea put forth by Binder et al., with workshop formats for practical action.

I will now turn to the second path of research that I see as falling in line with what I have done here, which would be to pursue a further contribution to fashion and dress research in the form of 'applied research'. In relation to this, I believe that in this thesis, I have only just opened the door to the extensive perspectives offered by Klepp's concept of 'favourites'. One direction to explore, following the implications suggested by this perspective, could be to pursue a cultural studies approach to the way people engage with musical genres in their attire. Having earned a BA in musicology myself, this objective has been lying in the periphery of my idea of 'sensory anchoring' even before I started writing my thesis. In my article, "Music and Dress" (Skjold 2010), I have taken a step on this path of correlating music and dance with dress styles, and I do believe that through concepts like Tharp's 'muscle memory' there is a whole lot to explore in this area. For example, how various generations are almost literally shaped by musical genres, in terms of silhouette and in terms of preferences related to surface, materials, trimming, accessories: in fact, in terms of their entire negotiation of appearance and bodily performativity.

Yet another direction within this second path would be to continue to fuel my theoretical framework with ideas from design research, accordingly aligning dress objects and the theories surrounding them more closely with the remaining areas of design, like product design or interaction design. Through this hold, I would be addressing the admonitions put forth by Poynor, which were touched upon lightly in the introduction to part III, telling us that by displacing 'fashion' as art, it is itself being displaced and consequently removed from its own framework and profession. Here I would once again build on the critical capacities of design, by and large. In many ways, these critical capacities of design reflect those of art. But design is not art. Here I will lean up again on the critique of 'design art' offered by Poynor, who claims that design is:

*"..a kind of art, although I don't want to stress the idea because constantly talking about design in terms of art only reinforces the assumption that art is the 'higher', more significant cultural activity, even if that is no longer the case"*

(Poynor 2008:41)



I am perfectly aware that such an approach might be upsetting to scholars who perceive fashion as being aligned with art. However, I believe that this can spawn further approaches such as the one taken by McRobbie, who has described how 'fashion art' became a way of legitimising the whole field during the rise of cultural industries in the New British Economy of the 1990's (McRobbie 2000). According to her, this caused everything that was associated with the 'rag trade' to be displaced as being subordinate, while young fashion designers came to occupy positions as 'star designers'. It is exactly this conflict that Poyner addresses. My agenda does not include any urge to defend fashion as being art, but rather to position fashion and dress within the field of design, because it is basically from here that fashion and dress are produced, promoted, disseminated, and sold. In this way, fashion and dress are seen as part of a design discourse that stresses the changing socio-economic structures affecting the work processes of the profession and its self-perception. Nowadays, this encompasses negative phenomena like sweatshops, the loss of know-how related to producing dress-ware in Western countries, the brutal exploitation of environments for the sake of obtaining raw materials, the exploitation of the workforce in outsourcing countries, extortion of consumers' self-esteem through stressful production cycles, and a dire perspective forecasting a lack of water for the dyeing of fabrics. On the other hand, the design of dress objects also encompasses positive phenomena that affect the profession, such as its intrinsic capacity to 'adorn people in dreams' about their future selves, to awaken memories and feelings, to provide pleasure through measures such as tactility or smells or sounds, and quite simply to awaken deep-seated emotions through the vehicle of its high *artistic* values in the shape of the composition, the handling of materials, the elements of dedicated craftsmanship, or through the colour palette, which expresses how people think and dream.

It is in this sense that I am promoting an 'object'-based approach to fashion and dress research *which derives from the field of design itself*. Throughout this thesis, I have tried to show how this might be relevant, as part of an attempt to close a number of conspicuous explanatory gaps in the general understanding of dress practice. It is my hope that this body of work contributes with showing a way forward.





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