

Creativity at Work:

# Translating Fashion into Danish

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## Introduction

This paper presents an analysis of the approximation of government and fashion industry in Denmark from the 1990s to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The analysis follows three dimensions: 1) the industry development from manufacturing to designer-dominated creative industry, 2) the way in which the fashion industry and fashion has been written into cultural industries policies and come to play a leading role in what is now called the “culture and experience economy” policy, and 3) the institutionalization of the fashion industry and fashion through the establishment of the network organization Danish Fashion Institute in 2005. Following the French sociologist Michel Callon, we analyze these developments as translation processes in order to, on an empirical study level, further investigate and discuss creative industries-government encounters.

Among fashion research scholars there have in recent years been a growing interest in rewriting the history of fashion in order to both recover local histories and to replace the previous notion that the fashion centre, notably Paris, was authoritative (e.g. White 2000, Brand and Teunissen 2005, Goodrum 2005). However, the argument we present here is the opposite. To paraphrase the statement from former US President John F. Kennedy’s inauguration speech in 1961, we do not ask what the country can do for fashion, but what fashion and the fashion industry can do for the country. In this speech Kennedy reversed the expectation that the people and organizations should be the beneficiaries of government, and instead mobilized them for the government. Our argument is that as a result of the above-mentioned developments, the fashion industry and fashion has been mobilized *for* Denmark. It cannot win the Vietnam War, which is what Kennedy wanted to do, but it can lend its luster to the nation. The catwalk has become a stage in which politicians launch themselves and the nation.

Our argument is further that this translation of fashion into Danish is the most significant element in the mobilization of Danish fashion. In terms of industry impact, the economic results are highly ambivalent and somewhat dubious; what is written up as a success story could just as easily be interpreted as failure. To be sure the success criteria that government and industry have developed are wide of the mark, both in terms of realism and desirability. Therefore the paper speaks to the emerging critical research on cultural industry policy.

But before turning to the analysis of translating fashion into Danish, we will review some key issues and concepts in the theoretical debates of cultural industries policy.

## Debates in Cultural Industries Policy

“Aestheticism and economism effectively cartelized the social world by dividing cultural exchange and market exchange into separate disciplinary jurisdictions. As a consequence, the juncture of these two aspects of life vanished from view, and the deep and unacceptable division within market culture reemerged as the deep but eminently acceptable division between the market and culture.”

Jean-Christophe Agnew (1986, pp.6-7)

During the past decade or so, governments around the world – at the local, regional as well as national level – have embraced the cultural or creative industries as policy objects (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005; Kong, 2000; Pratt, 2005). The main impetus for the development of government strategies and policy in this realm has been to mobilize culture to promote economic development. The conception of the notion of the creative industries and its subsequent diffusion has been linked to both the rejection forms of cultural policy grounded on subsidy of fine arts as well as a set of subtle moves to legitimize and retain them (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; O'Connor, 2007). But the term is increasingly identified with new approaches to cultural policy embracing a turn towards enterprise and innovation – approaches which establish creative industries as a legitimate concern in national cultural and economical policy (Keane & Zhang, 2008, 1; O'Connor, 2007, 41).<sup>i</sup>

Culture industries policy must negotiate tensions between fields of culture and economy, or, perhaps, more accurately the institutions which divide and define them. In the eyes of many observers, the creative industries and industrial policy represents a problem for traditional approaches to culture and cultural policy, and vice versa (Pratt, 2005). To frame and analyze some of these tensions, we will first address the object, objectives and rationales of cultural policy and then turn to different modes and models for the government of culture and cultural industries.

In a historical (or rather genealogical, Foucauldian) analysis, Tony Bennett (2001) groups the objectives of cultural policy and rationales behind them into three broad and overlapping categories: the symbolic, the social and the economic.

The symbolic use of culture refers to state support to cultural activities representing the power and virtues of a nation, people or political system. Bennett traces changes and continuities in the uses of culture to symbolize and from the early modern era to the present. Absolutist monarchies used culture as means to symbolize and bolster the power of the king. Later, art and culture came to represent the more abstract form of sovereignty vested in a democratic citizenry as well as collective ideals of the nation or people. Bennett links the social orientation to culture to government efforts to steer the conduct and ways of life of the population. Governments have historically “acted upon the social” (Bennett, 2001, p.3093) through prohibitions as well as cultural provisions. Thus, the development of cultural institutions in the 19th century,

such as public libraries, museums, art galleries and concert halls, were parts of a larger scheme to civilize the lower strata of the population through participation in rational, elevating and enlightening (elite) cultural forms. Today, both symbolic and social aspects of cultural policy to a larger extent reflect democratic principles of equal cultural entitlements and contestation of dominant values in divided and pluralist societies. But according to Bennett, social and civic aspects of cultural policies have recently been overshadowed by economic interests and concerns. He links the unprecedented significance of economic aspects of cultural policy to government responses to the demise of more traditional industrial sectors and rise of cultural and media industry in the wake of globalization, revolutions in information technology, and changing relations of work and leisure.

Andy Pratt (2005) offers a slightly different, more fine-grained and schematic framework for mapping the field of cultural policymaking. He deals with the discourses framing cultural industries policies, arguing that notions of culture are constructed through a number of intersecting discourses providing particular means of mobilizing the notion and defining its object. Pratt, like Bennett, identifies three main approaches to cultural policy. Both Pratt and Bennett operate with an 'economic' and a 'social' category, which, however, differ significantly. Pratt's remaining category is not called 'symbolic' but 'ideological/political', and two of its three subcategories, humanist and aesthetic, might be placed under Bennett's label of the social. The humanist stance emphasize the uplifting and civilizing properties of certain forms of culture, finding that it promotes notions of humanity and elevates the human spirit. Aesthetic discursive modes articulate aspirations of culture to perfectibility linking the creation and appreciation of 'great art' to transcendent experiences and values. It is Pratt's 'nationalist' subcategory of ideological/political discourse that comes closest to Bennett's notion of symbolic uses of culture. It concerns the way notions of cultural particularism and achievement function in the construction of the nation-state and national identity.

In Pratt's analysis, economic discourse of culture revolves around the issue of whether culture should be considered a private or public good. Pratt posits four approaches based on contrasting outlooks on this issue. The first construes culture as a private good. Private goods are traded as cultural commodities and analyzed by policy-makers according to their direct or indirect impact on the economy. In this line of thinking, which is associated with a neoliberal stance, public investment in cultural activities may be justified if returns in terms of benefits such as urban regeneration, export earnings or national and personal identity exceed administration costs. Conversely, culture can be seen as a public good when it makes sense to for government to provide it collectively. This may be the case when cost structure allows a good to be consumed by many at no extra cost, as in the case with radio. The two remaining economic discourses on culture identified by Pratt are rational choice or preference approaches and its variant model of meritorious or merit goods.

The former explains government support for arts and culture in terms public consent. The latter deals with cases of government policy towards goods that the public do not see value in yet may merit support.

The social dimension in Pratt deals mainly with the institutional texture of policy making. It does not question culture as an object of state policy, but regards it as an arm of welfare policy akin to health and education. Pratt in his account of the social dimension in cultural policy discourse, does not – as Bennett – interrogate the state’s instrumental use of culture in ‘acting upon the social’.

We have explored different objectives and rationales behind cultural policy, and now turn to mechanisms employed in and approaches to government of the cultural realm. In their influential analysis of the “arm’s length” principle in public support for the arts, Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey’s (1989) addressed the limits of government of culture and proposed a typology of four modes of support for the arts. The “arm’s length” principle is a central feature in the general system of “checks and balances” which pluralist democracies adhere to, to prevent undue concentration of power and conflict of interest. The role of the state ranges from a hands-off market- or donor-driven ‘facilitator’ model to a hands-on ‘engineer’ model. In the former, which is associated with the US, the arts are supported indirectly through tax deductions to private and corporate donors. The latter, in which the state owns means of artistic production, is known mainly from totalitarian regimes. In between, we find the ‘patron’ and ‘architect’ models. Both allow culture a certain degree of autonomy from both the state and market forces. The patron model, associated especially with Great Britain, ensure a measure of independence from state intervention by giving expert councils the authority to prioritize and channel public support. The architect model involves a more active role for the state, but not a state monopolization of the cultural sphere. Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey suggest that while the roles are in theory mutually exclusive, most nations combine some or all of them (p.2). Their analysis expresses concerns that the arm’s length principle in public support for the art, which is best ensured in the patron model, is under threat; “In the absence of any other system that is clearly superior, is not the arm’s length arts council the most effective guarantee that in a democratic country the arts will not be crushed under the tyranny of present-day commercial, moral or political concerns?” (p.3)

Bennett, who is less concerned about the fine arts, is less worried. He observes that liberal conceptions of government emphasizing the independence of civil society have gradually – but not without resistance and reversals – gained ground in Western democracies, and restricted direct forms of intervention in the cultural realm. While government funding remains significant, the state’s role is generally exercised through its regulatory capacities, rather than through a direct role in cultural production (2001, p.3096).

Pratt’s framework for cultural and cultural industry policy also considers different degrees or modes of governance. Aiming to escape the traditional state vs. market dualism, Pratt suggests a scheme with three basic

forms of governance adding to market anarchy and state organizational hierarchy, the notion of heterarchy or self-organization as a distinct form. While self-organization does represent 'a new balance point', it should not be identified too closely with either of the two intermediary positions of 'patron' and 'architect'. Pratt suggests that heterarchy is linked to new forms of coordination emerging in the wake of the transition from Fordism to Post-Fordism, and represents a rather unexplored territory within cultural policy. While Pratt explores ways of thinking of cultural policy-making that are relevant to current concerns and encompass also the cultural or creative industries, his break with traditional models of cultural policy is less profound than that of Potts and Cunningham (2008) and Keane and Zhang (2008).

Keane and Zhang are critical of the arm's length cultural policy model, which they find is too closely aligned to static and conservative conceptions of culture's role originating from the field of cultural economics. Instead, they adopt Cunningham and Potts' four model scheme (2008) which they find enables a more dynamic understanding of cultural industry's role in the international knowledge economy. Cunningham and Potts put forward four models reflecting different ideas on the role of the creative or cultural industries in the economy. The 'welfare model' assumes the cultural industry to have a negative impact on the economy. Support for the sector, which might be justified by the non-market or cultural value of the goods they produce, must be transferred from other areas of the economy. The second 'normal' model, insists that creative and cultural sectors is an industry (leisure or entertainment) as any other and should be treated as such, especially when it comes to resource allocation. The two remaining models, on the contrary, consider the creative industry to play a special and positive role in the economy. The growth model suggests that creative industries are of particular importance since they facilitate growth in other sectors. It is thus economically justified for governments to invest in the development of creative industries. The final, emerging 'creative economy'-model goes even further in its assumptions regarding the significance of the creative or cultural industries for economic growth. Its proponents view the creative industry as a crucial part of the whole economy's innovation system, a catalyst for growth and processes of change. Keane and Zhang advance the creative economy model, not only for economic reasons, but also for its role in promoting cultural vitality and diversity.

We have sought to establish a framework for analyzing government policies towards the cultural and creative industries. Initially, we observed that cultural industries has only recently emerged as an object of policy at different levels of government around the world, and has done so – it is broadly assumed – mainly because of a growing interest in the economic significance of culture and creativity. These observations point to the need for further empirical studies of how government policies towards specific creative industries have evolved in particular contexts and circumstance. Our review of some the existing work on cultural (industries) policy provides certain directions in terms of studying the

formation of cultural industries policies and interrogating their (espoused) objectives, rationales and models of governance.

### **Translation**

The question that we are posing in this paper is not the one that has been discussed already: why does fashion need the nation? Rather it is the other way round: why does the nation need fashion? What can fashion do for the nation? This is the reversal of the Kennedy quotation as mentioned earlier on.

As an analytical model we take Callon's article "Some elements of a sociology of translation" in which he analyzes an attempt to conserve the population of scallop in St. Brieuc Bay (1986). Callon's actor network theory (ANT) analysis is based on three methodological principles. The first is 'agnosticism', in the sense of abstaining from judging the way in which the actors analyze the society that surrounds them (Callon 1986, 3). This is based on a critique of the sociology of science that imposes sociological concepts such as norms and classes on science. Callon summarizes this approach in the phrase, "when the society described by sociologists confronts nature, society always has the last word" (1986, 2). The second principle is that of 'generalized symmetry' - using a single repertoire to analyze "a mixture of considerations concerning both society and nature". Thirdly, it follows the principle of free association, which involves abandoning a priori distinction between natural and social events.

On the basis of these three principles Callon goes on to analyze a series of what he calls moments of translation which involves three main actors, the scientists who have got the idea of breeding scallops on lines in the bay, the scallops that are involved scientific experiments, and the fishermen in the bay who are considering whether to join the conservation project or not. In the end the project is abandoned. In Callon terms, it is a study of power.

Our analysis of the encounter between government and fashion in Denmark is also shaped as three moments of translation, firstly in the definition the emergence of designer fashion on the conditions of complete outsourcing and the translation of the fashion industry from sunset industry to success story. Secondly, inscribing fashion in a central place in mediating between industrial and cultural policy. And thirdly, crystallizing (institutionalizing, mobilizing) these processes in the network organization Danish Fashion Institute and a series of further initiatives.

The fact that the present subject matter is so different from Callon's in itself requires a translation of Callon's concepts. As the framework is developed to bridge the gap between society and nature, its major contribution has been in the analysis of the process of identifying and establishing facts in a process that is symmetrical, and interacts with political decision making. Latour (1993) has termed this 'the parliament of things. While we are far from Habermas' notion of democracy as dominance-free conversation, Callon's analysis certainly shows that power is established through consensus in which the fishermen, the scallops and the scientists are "heard" in turn. Indeed, Callon's grid of analysis

is based on a vocabulary taken from parliamentary debate: problematization, interessement, enrolment, mobilization and dissidence.

By contrast, the present analysis is not concerned with the symmetry between nature and society, but the symmetry between economy, politics and culture. In the following sections we will examine the development of a new cultural (industries) policy based on a predominantly economic paradigm, and the development of designer fashion with a national or city 'brand'. The next step involves bringing these two encounters together in an even more generalized symmetry in the analysis of the Danish case study. The two scientific/academic discourses that have cut up this field between them are not natural and social science, but economics and cultural studies (in a very broad sense). Economics, in particular, has the role, not only of the dominant interpretive framework, but also a form of legitimating that has come to dominate in the field. Our methodological considerations are therefore based on a mistrust of the economics, and its basic assumptions of utility maximization, instrumentalism, cost-benefit analysis, accumulation, and progress.

Therefore we have taken our grid of analysis from an altogether different realm, that of fashion. The leading parameters are not instrumental but expressive, not utility but appearance, not consensus but seduction, not accumulation but contamination. Fashion, as Baudrillard (1993) has it, is the light sign, characterized by the delinking of signifier and signified. This presents a methodological challenge in an ANT framework with the main principle of that networks need to be stabilised and solidified. Our argument is that there a complex process of translation in which forces of stabilization interact with forces of lightness and simulation in a hybrid logic (which we will unfold further in the following sections). We consider this part of the analysis to be part of the analytical grid, too, based on Simmel's analysis of fashion as the reconciliation of two opposed social forces – the need to stand out and the need to fit in, and further that the restlessness of fashion is due to the fact that these are only superficially reconciled. With reference to the title of Callon's article we might say that we present some *other* elements of a sociology of translation.

Callon suggest that an infinite number of repertoires (analytical grids) are possible. It is up to the sociologist to choose the one that seems best adapted to his task and then convince his colleagues that he made the right choice (1986, 4). Our main argument for choosing fashion as our analytical grid is that it captures some elements of the political/economic/fashion world network that are otherwise marginalized, that are worrying but also powerful and fascinating, and which we believe makes fashion irresistible to politicians and the press. We are not talking about the high degree of ambivalence as to what exactly is going on in the Danish fashion industry, but with the economic certainty with which it is written up. In a typical media product (newspaper article, TV news clip, TV documentary, magazine feature) could be analyzed as the signifier being small Danish fashion designers and the signified being the textile/fashion industry as Denmark's 4<sup>th</sup> largest exporter. The mismatch is routinized. But wouldn't it be just as correct to reverse them? 'The 4<sup>th</sup> largest

exporter' is the signifier, in fact an economic claim that can only be experienced as a sign; it is not experienced in employment or in corporate power/presence. Its main referent to the real is the small fashion designer.

This success story cannot be understood by the (economic) logic of accumulation, but only by the (fashion) logic of contamination. A touch of fashion and the dusty old nation is as good as new.

## **The Global Mobilization of New Fashion Centres**

Fashion has historically been associated with cities, and the oldest fashion centres have been the capitals, seats of royal courts and sites of lavish consumption. There was a close relation between political power and power style. The primary example is Paris (Palmar 2007), but London can be added. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fashion has become more autonomous as a form of cultural production; with the development of the catwalk fashion show it became less dependent on the social prestige of the clients and the social calendar of the city.

For the new fashion centers that are the point of reference in this paper it is generally true that their recognition at the international level is more important than their role in the national economy. This shift has occurred gradually, at different times in different places. For the big cosmopolitan centers this shift has been the least obvious (one reason why it is not reflected in the literature) -- Paris and London, New York. Milan is the last fashion centre in which organizational innovation in the fashion industry played a significant role. The main rupture is therefore in the 1980s when Tokyo appeared as a new fashion centre in the fashion press. Tokyo was put on the fashion map by Japanese designers who gained recognition in Paris. They tended to be solid fashion design companies with ten or more years of experience in the home market, which is considered to be the most style conscious and quality critical fashion markets in the world. Although the Japanese designers were considered to be a group, their presence in Paris was not a result of a concerted effort; each had his or her own backing and strategy. The Tokyo Collections trade fair international press office was founded, rather reactively, to look after the crowds of foreign journalists that began to include Tokyo in their travel schedule. This type of organization is typical for Japanese governance/industrial policy - that the companies take on responsibilities for a number of public services/common goods/social responsibilities, whereas governmental institutions act behind and in close collaboration with the companies (Dore, 1986 e.g.).

But in accordance with its main orientation, the fashion press was less interested in the financial and organizational set up of Japanese fashion companies, and more in a colorful interpretation of the first systematic recognition of a non-western nation as a global style leader. They stressed culture over business. In borrowing heavily from a discourse of cultural stereotypes, they made the 'Japanese invasion of Paris' appear more unified than it actually was. In this respect, the encounter between the Japanese fashion designers and the international fashion press shaped the notions that went into

the idea that new fashion centers emerge through strategies and concerted effort. In her research on Hong Kong fashion designers, Skov has shown how important the nation is in the fashion-nation link (2003). The nation acts as a legitimator; in Hong Kong's laissez-faire economy, redistribution has very little legitimacy, so even though the Trade Development Council is funded by export levies, the big companies consider themselves entitled to decide how it is spent. The mechanism of representation and closely associated with that, redistribution, were never fixed in Hong Kong where small fashion designers were confronted with the suspicion from big business that they were appropriating resources for self-aggrandizement (in Denmark by contrast there is a generally accepted vicarious appreciation of the international success of individual Danes).

One reason why the culture-style link has been so attractive to newcomers to the international fashion scene is that allows for particularism. However, the notion that fashion designers from a single country should present some kind of stylistic unity has also been fraught with problems when design boards and industries have tried to use it. It is what the international press looks for (and writes up), but it can only partially be produced. While the attempt at explaining a fashion centre in terms of style is somewhat ambivalent, it is easier to point to the institutions that are required for a city or nation to present itself as a fashion centre. These are, firstly a designer fashion industry and secondly a biannual fashion week in which local (and international) designers can present their new collections to the local and international press. It is not hard to see that that what is at stake here is not so much a centre function, that is command over a hinterland/periphery (Hannerz, 1983) as, what Richard Wilk has characterized as a system of common difference (1995). In this respect, the meaning and power of 'a fashion centre' has changed completely in the shift from monocentric to polycentric fashion.

Around these two elementary forms, designer fashion industry and fashion week, there are a number of other institutions, including a fashion press, a chamber of commerce, a trade association, governmental support at city or national level, design schools, cultural institutions such as museums. In some cases this local fashion world coalesces in a single institution, but this is usually not the case. Some countries have a fashion council (British Fashion Council, founded in 1983, Australian Fashion Council; Swedish Fashion Council, founded 1979), as a collaborative organization for the fashion and textile business. The name council indicates that it is an organization with a constituency and a representative function. A 'fashion institute' usually designates a technical training institute or design school, as for example the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York or the Institut Francais de la Mode (IFM) in Paris. By comparison the Flandern Fashion Institute, established in 1998, was a new kind of institution. It is a 'knowledge center', but not devoted to education (rather branding Antwerp, museum and design school). The big difference from Denmark is that the Flandern Fashion Institute is still closely associated with the textile and fashion industry. To be sure the relation

between the industry (big companies) and designers is fraught with tension in most places; the Danish case seems to be anomalous because the designers are practically free from industry dominance. In this sense there is a tendency in the naming and the institutional set-up for this kind of network organization to become more and more of a 'free agent'.

Fashion stands out among the creative industries because commercialism is routinely accepted as a mark of quality. But the figures do not speak for themselves, and in reality there is a lot of construction of economic justifications. It is not surprising that there is some inflation of the economic impact of designer fashion, because since textile magnate Boussac backed Christian Dior's New Look designer fashion has been a platform for selling more than the clothes on the catwalk. This has included, firstly, (since the 1950s) textiles French, Italian and Japanese textiles, also important for the Belgian designers, and secondly, (since the 1960s) accessories, such as perfume, handbags and licenced products. But designer fashion has also been put to the service of representing cities, giving them a cosmopolitan gloss. Since the 1960s the trade policy of Hong Kong has been that 'fashion provides an image for Hong Kong' (Skov, 2004).

For these reasons, research that takes a less cultural and more economic tack on the (new) fashion centres do not necessarily avoid the pitfalls. Examples are the economic geographers - Rantisi on New York and Larner, Molloy and Goodrum on New Zealand and Gilbert in general (Beward & Gilbert 2006). Larner, Molloy and Goodrum (Larner et al., 2007) investigate the emergence of Auckland as designer fashion center of, if not global, then regional significance. They describe how designers, government agencies and private sector sponsors came together and envisioned a new role for New Zealand's designer fashion industry in which "both commercial success and national rebranding were paramount" (p.388). Government policy in other words sought to use the growing international stature of New Zealand fashion design industry, to alter prevailing stereotypes of the country as predominantly bucolic and rural. Their analysis suggests however, that while Auckland has benefitted from fashion industry agglomeration and infrastructural development, neither city nor country have reaped significant symbolic benefits and the association with fashion and its connotations to cosmopolitanism, creativity, stylishness and taste. Part of the explanation is that certain government agencies at the national and local level have failed to grasp and support the opportunity the development of Auckland as a fashion city presented.

As we will demonstrate, the case of Denmark/Copenhagen as aspiring global fashion center or cluster, presents many parallels to the story of Auckland. Our analysis will pursue similar lines of inquiry regarding the use of fashion in national and urban self-representation.

## From Clothing to Fashion Industry

Recognizing and speaking of a Danish fashion industry is a late 20<sup>th</sup> Century phenomenon. It has evolved alongside the transformation of the clothing industry in Denmark during the 1990s from being primarily a manufacturing based industry to become a knowledge- and designed-based creative industry. In the following it will be unfolded how this transformation process has progressed through the looking glass of Callon's (1986) analysis of "translation".

To begin with the end, what defines the Danish fashion industry in figures and numbers is an industry consisting of approximately 620 companies registered by *Statistics Denmark* as "whole sellers of clothing" (Deloitte 2008). The industry employs approx. 10.875 people and in 2007 had an annual turnover of 23.384 billion DKK where 90 percent were gained on export. The three main export markets of the industry are Germany, Sweden and Norway (DTB, 2008, 2-3). The industry is often mentioned as the fourth biggest export industry of the Danish manufacturing industries. This is based on adding the export profits of Danish clothing, textiles and leather goods.<sup>ii</sup> The industry is dominated by three companies, who are estimated to account for 75 percent of its total export profits. The three companies are: Bestseller A/S<sup>iii</sup>, BTX Group A/S<sup>iv</sup> and IC Companies A/S<sup>v</sup>. The remaining industry is based primarily on small sized companies of approximately 4-9 full-time employees, mostly owner-managed.<sup>vi</sup> The companies are customarily defined as either price-driven or design-driven. Some companies compete mainly on prices, and rely heavily on minimizing manufacturing and distribution costs. Other companies base their market position mainly on design and branding of its goods.

What makes up the fashion industry is more than export earnings, turnover and employment numbers. In fact the statistics are based on traditional calculations of the clothing industry, and do not take into account employment within fashion media, PR, advertising, modeling, styling, or industry networking and policy making. Furthermore, it does not call attention to the cultural changes which the transformation from clothing to fashion industry implies. Mapping the translation from one actor network to another might help understand this better.

The story has to begin a while ago: In Denmark in the 1950s. At that time fashion was in the Danish context widely regarded as a foreign (most often Parisian), elite and female phenomenon. The fashion industry operated through what, in fashion theory, is termed a mono centric fashion system (Davis 1992, 201). This did not only influence fashion consumption in Denmark but also the local clothing manufacturing industry. For Danish women to follow the latest fashion, they would keep up with what made the news at the Parisian haute couture fashion houses – such as Dior, Balenciaga, Chanel, Balmain and many other important names of the time. Copenhagen department stores and their

special modeling sections (in Danish, “modelsalon”) would then as mediators of the latest fashion buy patterns and drawings (models) from the haute couture houses for reproduction aimed at their local clientele. The international fashion industry did at that time operate within a center-to-periphery framework (Pouillard 2008). The Danish fashion consumers and the local clothing industry were so to speak at the receiving end of fashion, if fashion conscious at all. It was common among clothing manufacturers to follow Parisian fashion trends, but not in any systematic way, presenting new collections of style, color and fabrics every 6 months. Instead they produced by demand and focused on making a few kinds of clothing (slacks, blouses, sweaters, women’s jackets etc.) rather than whole outfits for day and evening wear. The clothing industry at the time existed based on a network relating the international fashion industry with foreign and local textile manufacturers, Danish retailers, press and consumers.

This network changed over the following three decades enrolling new actors establishing different relationships among existing actors. As a result of the new network formation the clothing industry was translated into a fashion industry. The translation process began because of increasing competition from foreign imports of clothing on the home market in the late 1950s and responding efforts to expand export markets to stay in business. At the same time the uni-centric fashion system was transforming into a polycentric, due to shifts in fashion consumption patterns partly reflecting an erosion of the perception of fashion as a mainly elite and feminine phenomenon. Fashion was no longer a privileged domain of artistic createurs at the Parisian haute couture houses. As fashion theory has repeatedly established, fashion was “democratized” (e.g. Lipovetsky 1994, Breward 2003, English 2007). Democratization implies that what becomes fashion is not dictated exclusively by geographical locality, profession or mode of production (tailored or industrially manufactured). Street styles and educated fashion designers based elsewhere than Paris could also create fashions – women’s as well as men’s ready-to-wear fashion. New fashion centers emerged. To the Danish clothing industry this meant that some companies adopted new strategies. They wanted to change their role from receiving fashion edicts to taking part in its creating fashion for the home market as well as export markets. One approach to reach this goal was to work more systematically bi-annual collections, focusing more on design by for instance collaborating with trained fashion designers in developing new collections. At the same time new kinds of companies joined the industry and its network. These were founded around a fashion designer and in some cases with their own manufacturing facilities, in others sourced through suppliers giving them further flexibility towards producing fashion and not being dependent on the knowledge and skills of e.g. pattern makers, cutters and seamstresses used to make outerwear, women’s dresses or men’s pants. Following this development the clothing industry became promoters of local fashion designers that in return gave attention to the industry in the local press and fashion magazines. The new fashion designers of the 1960s and collaborating with the clothing industry was names such as Søs Drasbæk, Margit Brandt, Mugge Kølpin, Lise-Lotte

Wiingaard, Lars Hillingsø, Sysser Ginsborg and Lennart Råholt. Furthermore the industry, through its trade organization (Beklædningsindustriens Sammenslutning), supported the increased focus on fashion by in 1958 introducing biannual fashion weeks in Copenhagen for, respectively, Danish made women's wear fashion (Dansk modeuge) and men's wear fashion (Dansk herremodemesse). The Danish textile industry had introduced trade fairs in the provincial city of Herning, center to the at the time up-coming textile industry cluster, already in 1947. However, the Herning fair was annual and did not follow the rhythm of the fashion industry (Melchior, 2008). Due to the changing fashion system, the Copenhagen department stores lost their importance as fashion mediators during the 1960s and symptomatically their modeling sections disappeared during the early 1970s (Mortensen 1993).

With the economic crisis of the early 1970s, Denmark's membership of the European Common Market in 1973, and the increasing imports of low cost, foreign goods, the 1970s and 1980s were decades of struggle of survival for the clothing manufactures, who still dominated the industry. Even the international quota system, alias the Multi Fiber Agreement, (1974-2005) regulating imports of textile and clothing from non-European countries to the European Common Market and the US (Hilger, 2008, 9), only temporarily improved the situation for the manufactures before speeding up the outsourcing of the manual production of clothing to low wage countries. The development toward low-cost outsourcing slowly took off in the 1970s and increasing until almost all production had moved abroad by the late 1990s. Returning to be fashion followers as prior to the 1960s was not an option either. Consequently manufactures, who failed to establish and move production to low cost countries and adapt their businesses to the new globalized business conditions, went out of business. By the early 1990s the Danish clothing industry was struggling to such an extent, that newspaper headlines declared the demise of the industry. On the one hand, they were correct in that clothing manufacturing all but ceased in Denmark, however newspapers failed to predict that many companies focusing on designing fashionable clothes and selling them home and abroad would prevail and together with newcomers build a new fashion industry based on fashion design, logistics, retail, marketing and management. These design driven companies operated as part of a broader globalized fashion industry. During the 1990s, an increasingly liberal quota system on fiber trade, made it more and more common to produce clothes outside Europe; in India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and China. This led to cost reductions in the manufacturing processes, but also paved the way for new stylistic possibilities. As a result, ethnic bohemian styles based on Indian embroidery techniques and color schemes became fashionable and seen as stylistic representation of Danish fashion design. Fashion brands such as Munthe plus Simonsen, Bruuns Bazaar, Day Birger et Mikkelsen were the trendsetters in the development of Danish fashion in the 90s. Bruuns Bazaar got to show its collections at a fashion show registered on the official show list of the French fashion trade organization, Fédération Française de la Couture du Prêt-à-porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode, at the Parisian prêt-à-

porter fashion week in 1999. Munthe plus Simonsen followed suit a year after, bearing evidence that the quality of their fashion design and their level of creativity had reached an international standard, and demonstrating the rise of the young Danish fashion industry.

Another significant moment in the translation of the clothing industry into a fashion industry came in 1997, when changes in trade organization rules made “wholesellers of clothing” (as most of the companies in the fashion industry are registered in research statistical), and not only manufacturers, eligible membership. The trade slowly began to speak of itself synonymously as the Danish clothing industry and the Danish fashion industry. Even so, fashion is still not included in the official name of the trade organization.

Changes in the organization of the bi-annual fashion fair held in Copenhagen further stabilized the establishment of the fashion industry. Since 1984, one major fashion fair for children’s, women’s and men’s wear fashion had formed the basis for the two annual fashion weeks in Copenhagen. Until 1993 named “Future Fashion Copenhagen” and since then “Copenhagen International Fashion Fair”<sup>vii</sup>, the fair until the 90s been dominated by the manufacturing companies and was mainly fashion following. In this context, the new design driven fashion companies found it difficult to be recognized as fashion-making. This changed in 1998, when a new fashion fair, CPH Vision, was included as part of the fashion week. CPH Vision was initiated by Jan Carlsen, the former head of sales at the Bella Center, the conference center hosting Copenhagen International Fashion Fair. Carlsen objective was to create a Scandinavian fair for design-driven and street style fashion companies. Located in the old meat packing district of Copenhagen, which at the time was turning into a new creative center, it soon changed the face of the fashion week and turned independent fashion companies into the perceived frontrunners of the new fashion industry.<sup>viii</sup> The arrival of CPH Vision also made accentuated the divisions among the companies in the fashion industry. Now each group had their own fashion fair and the commonly recognized divide between the price-focused fashion companies, located mainly around Herning, Brande and Ikast in Jutland, and the design driven fashion companies, located in Copenhagen, had become even more visible. What is more significant about these developments, perhaps, was that it linked the image of the industry as a whole to design-driven fashion, even though the industry sales and earnings are generated primarily by major price-driven fashion companies.

Under the translation from clothing industry into fashion industry, old network alliances were dissolved, but new ones were established, reconfiguring the network. As will be highlighted later, the new fashion industry has attracted government interest, which has led to the establishment of the industry’s network organization: Danish Fashion Institute.

## Fashion Moves into Politics

The Danish clothing industry has as long as it has existed been subject to general industry policies, framing the possibilities for the industry's daily practices. For the fashion industry the situation changed by the turn of the century, when the Danish government politics initiated focusing on the future potential for societal and economic development through what was termed "the cultural and experience economy". The fashion industry was not only part of the government's general industry policy but became further part of a political strategy and subject to ordinary industry politics. In the following it will be highlighted through a number of government initiated reports how a stronger and stronger tie has been created between government politics and the fashion industry, resulting in a currently clear alliance that can make it relevant to discuss, in order to further understand, how Denmark "needs" fashion and the fashion industry.

The government initiative to focus on the cultural and experience economy can be traced back to the Social Democrats and the Social Liberal Party government coalition 1993-2001. In 2000 the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Business Affairs published the report *Danmarks kreative potentiale. Kultur- og erhvervspolitisk redegørelse* (eng. "Denmark's creative potential. A cultural and business political review"). As stated in the foreword, the report was considered to be the first official policy statement on the future potential of and need for linking the cultural and the commercial sectors (KUM & OEM, 2000, 5). The argument cited the identification of opportunities in this area for new jobs, export growth and business development. The US was highlighted as a frontrunner in this race and as proof of the profitability of the cultural industries. The report believed that Denmark needed follow a similar path, if it was to meet the future challenges of globalization. The potential for future growth laid not so much in selling products, as in selling stories, experiences, and identity through working strategically with design and creativity. The report cited and built heavily on arguments present by two American economists, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, in their treatise *The Experience Economy*, which had been published in 1999. The report did not address the Danish fashion industry head on, but made reference to fashion designers as "market and commercial oriented entrepreneurs" (KUM & OEM, 2000, 71) and categorized the clothing industry as part of the Danish cultural industries (KUM & OEM, 2000, 37). In this way, the fashion industry was presented as an exemplary case demonstrating the profitable linkage of design and business, recommended by the policy report.

The transfer of power in 2001 from the Social Democratic to a Liberal Conservative coalition did not cool government interest in the cultural industries. This is evident in the 2003 report by the present Ministry of Culture and the new Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, *Danmark i kultur- og oplevelsesøkonomien – 5 nye skridt på vejen* (In English "Denmark in the cultural

and experience economy – five new steps ahead”). However, fashion was included as an independent area in the cultural- and experience economy, while the word “clothing” had been omitted (KUM & OEM, 2003, 8). The report highlighted the importance of creativity, design and innovation for the competitiveness of Danish companies’ under globalization. It expressed the Danish government’s vision for further extending and exploiting synergies between the areas of culture and commerce (KUM & OEM 2003, 14). To realize its vision, the government proposed a number of initiatives to strengthen the area, including intensifying the branding Danish design internationally and advancing professionalism of design-based companies, including those in the fashion industry (KUM & OEM 2003, 17). The report, by recognizing the fashion industry and classifying it as a creative industry, marked the translation of fashion into (prioritized) object of government policy. By regarding the fashion industry as design-based, government policy reinforced the image of Danish fashion as a design-driven industry, decoupling or disassociating it from its price-driven base.

Later the same year the Ministry of Economics and Business Affairs published a report by the research and analysis unit FORA focusing specifically the Danish “fashion industry”, *Sammenligning af danske og udenlandske rammebetingelser og innovationssystemer inden for modebranchen* (in English, “Comparing the politics and innovation systems in the fashion industry in Denmark and abroad”). The report reiterated the arguments of the previous reports, stressing the importance of developing the level of innovation in different industries such as the fashion industry. It also heralded the Danish fashion industry as a success story even though it employed only half the workforce of fifteen years before, because it had managed over the same period to double its turnover and export profits. The industry had, it was argued, proved that it was possible to successfully transform from a manufacturing industry to a knowledge-based globalized cultural industry (FOR A, 2003, 17, 18). For the Ministry of Economics and Business Affairs, the fashion industry constituted an exemplary case for how to tackle the challenges in a globalized world represented proof of the future potential of Danish industry.

The report focused on three areas its analysis of the fashion industry: Innovation, knowledge sharing/knowledge centers, and design education. These areas were compared to international examples. Regarding innovation, it was stated that part of the success of the Danish fashion industry was founded on a range of companies’ ability to control costs (“price innovate”), not work strategically with design. The other success factor was some companies’ ability to implement user-driven innovation through a strong, independent design profile. “User-driven innovation” was not clearly defined, besides being the opposite of “price innovation” and a matter of following consumer demand instead of the competitors or market. As such, the report presented a more nuanced picture of the fashion industry, but raised questions about the government’s use of it as a model industry. While it demonstrating a successful cultural industry as well as an industry working strategically with innovation, but relied less on creativity than the identification of user needs

through market research. With regards to knowledge sharing and knowledge centers in the Danish fashion industry, the report made it clear that trend forecasting agencies handled this function. Citing the international example of the public private partnership *Flandern Fashion Institute* (established 1998) and the development of the Antwerp/Belgian fashion scene, the report made recommendations on how to strengthen this area in Denmark. Finally, the report stated that the fashion education was on a high level, creatively and conceptually. However, specific areas of knowledge were seen as missing research-driven innovation. In its conclusion, the report stated that the Danish fashion industry was lacking a high level of systematic and research-based work with innovation. Design innovation was not enough in itself. The Danish fashion industry needed to begin working with user driven innovation as well as collaborating with knowledge centers. Therefore, the report suggested a bench mark study of the Danish fashion industry, so further political initiatives could be taken to strengthen the future development of the industry.

In 2005, the next FORA-report on the Danish fashion industry was published. This report retained its predecessor's focus on innovation practices. As the title of the report indicated – *Brugerdreven innovation i dansk mode – den 5. globale modeklynge* (in English, “User-driven innovation in Danish fashion – the fifth global fashion cluster”) – user driven innovation was a key focus area. The report again described the characteristics of the Danish fashion industry in facts and figures and made international comparisons. In its conclusion it argued, firstly, that user driven innovation should be further stimulated in the industry as it would be beneficial to the majority of the companies, as they were considered to be operating in the mid-price segment of the industry. Secondly, it stated that the Danish fashion industry could not be compared to the four leading clusters of the international fashion industry; New York, Milano, Paris and London. However, if the Danish fashion industry would begin to operate as a single cluster, establish knowledge centers and network organizations to strengthen knowledge sharing, and focus on the non-creative skills in design education, it would be possible to make Denmark the fifth global fashion cluster. Finally, it stressed the importance of differentiation. A Danish fashion cluster had to compete on specific Danish competences and Danishness, that would make the industry and its products stand out from other fashion clusters (FORA 2005, 60-62).

With the last FORA report, the government's intentions and interest in the Danish fashion industry seemed clearer. User-driven innovation had become the official Danish strategy for securing growth under globalization. The fashion industry was viewed as having the potential, under the right conditions, to make Denmark a fifth global fashion cluster. This would be beneficial not only for the industry and individual companies, but also ensure recognition of the country as an attractive, modern nation. The emphasis on differentiation through Danishness, revealed the authors' belief that Danish culture represented a competitive resource for economic development in a

globalized world. The series of reports reviewed seem more preoccupied with the fashion industry as a means through which government can legitimize and advance its political agenda, than the Danish fashion industry's own outlook and visions or its expectations to government's role in its field. And therefore we might conclude that the government initiated a translation process in which the fashion industry became an allied actor in its network.

### **Danish Fashion Institute: How Allies are Mobilized in Practice**

An outcome of the translations of the clothing industry to fashion industry and the fashion industry into an allied actor of new government policies, was the establishment of the network organization Danish Fashion Institute in November 1<sup>st</sup> 2005; seven months after the publication of the final FORA report recommending the establishment of a network organization to improve coordination and collaboration within the fashion industry. The founding of Danish Fashion Institute and its following the next three years of operation, demonstrates how the network organization is mobilized as allied for government in its encounters with the fashion industry.

Danish Fashion Institute was established as an independent initiative group consisting of representatives from the Danish fashion media and industry<sup>ix</sup>. However, the organization was established on the basis of the two above mentioned FORA reports and only mustered the support of a smaller number of the Danish fashion companies. In this respect the organization was established both 'for' and 'by' the fashion industry, as it was stated in the founding meeting of the organization.<sup>x</sup> The mission of the organization was primarily to coordinate the industry's activities across geographical and cultural boundaries and to promote Danish fashion as a whole, nationally as well as internationally, just as recommendation in the last FORA report. From its beginning the organization has financed its staff and activities through a combination of membership fees of approximately 10.000 DKK per annum (in 2005 there was 60 members of Danish Fashion Institute; by 2008 the number had increased to 109 members) and government funding.<sup>xi</sup> This made it possible to hire director, Eva Kruse, first part-time and since 2007 full time, as well as one full time employee responsible for managing the coordination and development of the Copenhagen Fashion Week. In 2009 the organization employs seven people. Further the organization has a board of directors. In the first board of directors Tom Steifel Kristensen was chairman (marketing director of Kopenhagen Fur, the cooperative of Danish breeders and fur processors). Members of the board were: Henrik Theilbjørn (CEO of IC Companies A/S), Mads Nørgaard (owner of Copenhagen-based fashion company), Karen Simonson (owner and designer of a Copenhagen based fashion company), Anne Mette Zachariassen (Principal of the industry school Teko Center Danmark), Anders Knutsen (former CEO of Bang & Olusen, chairman of the board of directors at the food and ingredients company Danisco A/S and Copenhagen Business School) and Thomas Hargreave (owner

of photo agency and member of the initiative group of Danish Fashion Institute).

The main activity of Danish Fashion Institute was at first to position itself as the coordinating body of the fashion week held in Copenhagen twice a year and promoting it under the name of Copenhagen Fashion Week, which it holds the rights to. Since 2004, the trade organization (DTB) had promoted the name Copenhagen Fashion Days, but had not established it firmly enough to prevent the acceptance of the change in February 2006. Many member companies found that DAFI's role in the fashion week legitimized the organization and justified membership. Danish Fashion Institute managed fairly quickly to coordinate the planning of the fashion show schedule, to assign models to the different shows and to first publish a fashion week catalogue distributed to local as well as foreign buyers and journalists. Even though the trade organization did not initially support the coordination initiative, it accepted it as Copenhagen Fashion Week gradually proved able to promote the industry and attract more and more participants and visitors each time. In this way, Danish Fashion Institute managed in relatively short time to make itself the main organizing body of Copenhagen Fashion Week, and through different media initiatives take charge of communicating the event to the public and thus shaping its image. These initiatives included broadcasting the fashion shows to the public on huge screens in the streets of Copenhagen, running an Internet based fashion TV station during fashion week, and publish a special fashion week news paper - Dansk Daily - for the industry professionals as well as interested members of the general public.

Six month after Danish Fashion Institute was established, it set itself the task of identifying the "DNA of Danish fashion" in order to make a brand strategy for Danish fashion nationally and abroad. The members of the organization agreed that such an identification, which had been recommended by the 2005 FORA report, was necessary for establishing a common platform for promoting the Danish fashion industry in a more unified manner. Fashion researchers associated with the newly established research and knowledge network MOKO was commissioned to write the report locating the DNA of Danish fashion.<sup>xii</sup> The report reviewed the history of the fashion industry dating back to the 1950s, tracing 60 years of different identities; reviewed the experience of branding of modern Danish furniture design in the 1950s and 1960s to assess the opportunities of branding Danish fashion as Danish Design; and finally presented a brief qualitative survey of foreign fashion buyers and fashion journalists' perception of Danish fashion (Rasmussen, 2006). In its conclusion, the report pointed out the difficulties in determining a DNA-profile reflected in the aesthetics of Danish fashion design. However, some common denominators existed for fashionable clothing designed in Denmark. The report highlighted accessibility, in terms of both the useability of Danish designer fashion and relatively low prices of Danish-designed clothing was specifically highlighted, as significant characteristics. This was reflected the fact that most companies

were shaped by home market conditions where Danish consumers are known for on average spending much less on clothing than their Scandinavian neighbors (Melchior & Olsen-Rule 2008). Perhaps because of the inclusiveness of the report, the Danish Fashion Institute has not yet developed a brand or branding strategy for Danish fashion. According to Eva Kruse, it is still something the organization wants to do, however funding has so far been insufficient.<sup>xiii</sup>

Instead Danish Fashion Institute has concentrated on initiatives reflecting the government agenda, backed by government funding. The organization's activities in 2007 and 2008 illustrate this. In the autumn of 2007, Danish Fashion Institute arranged a conference on corporate social responsibility in the fashion industry, sponsored -- in line with the governments newfound environmental consciousness -- by the Ministry of Economics and Business Affairs. Later, a Nordic/Baltic collaborative project called NICE -- Nordic Initiative Clean and Ethical followed. The project was part of the government sponsored "Fashion Zone"-initiative. The Danish Fashion institute was put in charge of the "Fashion Zone", the first of four government initiated private public partnerships aimed at promoting the cultural and experience economy in Denmark through strengthening the collaborative work within the industry and the promotion of Danish fashion.<sup>xiv</sup>

The Danish Fashion Institute's activities have clearly been directed at meeting the agenda and priorities of government in order to secure funding to survive and maintain its legitimacy. From a government perspective, it demonstrates how a network organization such as Danish Fashion Institute can be used as instruments to influence specific industries and be enlisted to promote broader government aims. The government mobilized the organization and the fashion industry as its allied, in turn making it possible for the Fashion Institute, to give the industry more attention and resources that it members pay for.

### **Fashion Lends its Luster to Denmark**

As Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2005) suggest, we need to consider government actions beyond those which formally declare themselves cultural or creative industries policy (p.2). This involves observing the ways in which government representatives through different actions and measures recognize or indirectly support creative industries.

Over the last couple of years since the introduction of Copenhagen Fashion Week, top politicians have been frequent guest attending front row at fashion shows and had public appearance in news papers and magazines expressing their interest and being proud of Danish fashion and the Danish fashion industry. In a show of support for the industry under the financial and economical crisis, the prime minister attended the Copenhagen Fashion Week for the first time in February 2009, touring the fair with Eva Kruse of DAFI, holding a meeting with directors seven of fashion companies, and attending the

fashion show of prominent Copenhagen brand Bruun's Bazaar. The fashion show was held at the City Hall. Joining PM Fogh Rasmussen in the front row was two other cabinet ministers, the administrative leader of the Ministry of Culture, as well as the Lord Mayor of Copenhagen and two other the capital's mayors.

The Lord Mayor, Ritt Bjerregaard, a former European Commissioner, who has served in various Cabinet Minister positions in Social Democratic governments, has just like some of her fellow Copenhagen mayors, become a regular at fashion shows. Under her administration, the City Hall has opened its doors for the Fashion Week and become one of its central venues for shows and events. Recently activities have spilled out into the City Hall Square. Bjerregaard, in her late 60s, does not see herself as being in target group of the fashion week, but has suggested a budding fashion consciousness and at representative occasions made a point of wearing and supporting Danish designers. She expressed certain reservations about ethical standards in the industry, particularly underweight and anorectic models, but otherwise embraced the City of Copenhagen's cooperation with fashion for several reasons: Obviously, with attendance figures rising above 65,000, the Fashion Week was an attractive event for the capital's hospitality industry. Evidently, city officials also valued the Fashion Week's role in attracting international attention for Copenhagen as a design and fashion capital, helping it stand out. But for Bjerregaard hosting the fashion week at the City Hall also represented part of a strategy for a new style of government. It was opportunity for turning City Hall from a "closed-door bureaucratic base of operations" into a place people associated with fun and surprising events. For this reason, it was important for Bjerregaard to involve the general public in the event, which is why the city also collaborated with Danish Fashion Institute in broadcasting from shows and events on big screens in some of Copenhagen's more crowded public squares. Making the fair a more public event would reflect that fact that fashion had become a vital element in the capital's economy, self-image and culture.

**DANSK DAILY** – Copenhagen Fashion Week's official newspaper. Thursday February 2, 2009 interview Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, Ritt Bjerregaard:

**Charlotte Wendt Jensen, Danish Daily:** *Has fashion become more important for Copenhagen in the past few years?*

**Ritt Bjerregaard:** *Yes. Copenhagen has become a wealthier city, meaning that people have the money to buy better quality clothes, giving more Copenhageners the urge to brand themselves via what they wear. I think Copenhageners are really inventive and have a uniquely fresh attitude when it comes to fashion. They mix the weirdest things. My eyes are always wide open with fascination when I see tube socks with miniskirts, for instance, and a lot of Copenhagen-based designers are able to convert these quirky trends into something that everyone can use.*

(Dansk Daily, Thursday, February 2, 2009, p. 8)

The prime minister's appearance – and our main focus is the national government's relationship of fashion – bore evidence of the interest national government had taken in fashion, and the role it had come to place in its strategies and visions for Denmark. By his own admission unacquainted with the world of fashion (and unable to tell the brand of suit he was wearing), the Prime Minister described the show as “really exciting” and “a completely new experience”. Soon after, his government's identification of the Denmark with fashion was proclaimed internationally. As the excerpt from the magazine *Monocle* indicates, it is not only the fashion industry that is of government interest, but also fashion's ability to give the nation a modern, dynamic and creative image highly valued in the global catwalk economy (Löfgren 2005).

**MONOCLE** – the trendy Wallpaper spin-off magazine briefing on global affairs, business, culture and design reports in its March issue 2009 from the Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen:  
**Tylor Brûlé/Monocle:** *If we look at what the mission of your foreign ministry is – what sort of message do you push out in the world?*  
**Anders Fogh Rasmussen:** *I would point to three important images of Denmark. First, Denmark as a creative nation: the nation of design, fashion, architecture, modern furniture, etc. Secondly, Denmark as a green nation. And thirdly, I would say Denmark as a life-quality nation. These three elements are strengths in a modern world.*  
**Tylor Brûlé/Monocle:** *Is it important to be made in Denmark or simply designed in Denmark?*  
**Anders Fogh Rasmussen:** *I think it is a combination of manufacturing and design. And let me stress that Denmark will still for quite some years be a manufacturing country. And be very strong in agriculture. But more and more, Denmark will be a service-oriented country. We will see employment move from manufacturing – manufacture in Denmark – to China and India. But in exchange, we will create new jobs in the areas of design, fashion and so on.*  
 (Monocle, issue 21, volume 03, March 2009, p. 48)

The discourse around Denmark as a fashion nation is distinct from both the cultural discourse of the Fordist welfare state, that was dominant until the 1980s and the national discourse, which is dominant today, and associated most directly with the anti-foreign policy and populist nationalist party. The Fordist welfare state was based on the ideal that class differences between producers and consumers should be minimal. The Fordist ideal is that the factory workers should also be the consumers of the products they made. Cultural nationalism played a relatively marginal role here, and only in terms of the manufacturing and production process: protection of Danish labor. There was therefore a need to contain the economic tensions of the clothing production chain within a single social system/nation state. Close behind the image of the fashion model was the image of the low-paid factory worker. What happened in the 1990s when the national manufacturing base finally eroded, was that fashion production was in a certain sense liberated from the manufacturing industry. This enabled new styles, especially more elaborate and ‘ethnic’ designs using sequins and embroidery, which because their required more handiwork would

have been too expensive to manufacture in Europe. The image of what is Danish fashion design was therefore set afloat, and open for re-invention.

Also economically and statistically, the problems of defining the Danish fashion industry became paramount. Does it include a Danish-owned company's operation of factories and chain stores in China and East Europe? Does it include a Danish-born fashion designer who is educated, living and working abroad? There are statistical problems in delimiting the fashion industry, so the statistical reporting became a production of 'facts' still based on the old parameters of the clothing industry, however in relation to the new Danish fashion industry with large uncertainties. This made it relatively easy to present Danish fashion and the Danish fashion industry as a success story, as already mentioned in the sections above. Even though, as Professor Flemming Agersnap at CBS put it in reaction to the industry report made by CBS – *Fashion in the Danish Experience Economy* (Tran 2008) – it could just as well have been written up as a failure.

With the apparently solid economic underpinning, the most important significance of the success story is the fact that it creates a new 'imagined community' of Danes. Unlike the welfare state in which the national imagined community had to contain class differences and economic tensions, Danes are now imagined homogeneously as sophisticated cosmopolitan consumers. Even if the tensions inherent in fashion production are not resolved, they are sufficiently repressed so that the Danes can be abhorred by information about the poor working conditions in Asian clothing factories at the same time as they go bargain hunting. The low-price focus of Danish fashion markets is interpreted as an ethical asset of democratic availability, not for its less-than-ethical effect on the value chain of pressurizing Asian suppliers to manufacture clothes under sweatshop condition. In this respect, the fashion economy has lost its signified.

The Danish imagined community presented by fashion (discourse) differs significantly from what today is the dominant national discourse – a defensive stance of protecting the nation, firstly against immigration and secondly against adulteration of Danish culture, both through immigrant culture, but also through the use of English as an academic language etc. This nationalist stance is quite well documented in the literature on globalization – the idea that the nation must be defended against a rampant globalization. There is very little dialogue between these two ways of imagining Denmark, but demonstrate how arbitrary it is. The nationalist politicians do not turn up at fashion shows. The fashion designers tend not to engage with what is considered to be legitimate Danish culture, neither through textile and dress history or through conceptual design.

These two versions of the imagined community represent completely different ways of being in the (international) world. The nationalist stance is defensive and aggressive; the fashion stance appears simpler in that it seeks to pass merely as one cosmopolitan among others. However this goal of fitting in (Simmel 1904/1998) is belied by the enthusiastic self congratulation at each small success, which reveals that the boundary between Denmark and the

world is still imagined as a gigantic threshold. Because the threshold is always confirmed the effect of the cosmopolitan discourse is also to reinforce the provincialism of Denmark. Rune Lykkeberg has written about the cultural debate, kulturradikalisme and class alliances during the welfare state (and the change of the in the 21<sup>st</sup> century). This debate can be rightly criticized for its patronizing alliance between the intellectual left and the 'people' urban and rural working class. He sees it as replaced by a nationalist populism (Lykkeberg 2008). We see it as more of a delinking of two tracks – what counts as the 'national' and the 'cosmopolitan' poles in Danish cultural policy. The new thing is, perhaps, that there is not attempt at reconciliation or dialogue between them.

## Conclusion

What can fashion and do for Denmark, then?

We have investigated Denmark's efforts to nurture its fashion industry and establishing itself and its capital as a fashion centre of international significance. Exploring the meaning of the notion of fashion centres, as the fashion world has moved from a monocentric to polycentric (but oligopolistic) structure. In the current scenario in which of several cities around the world are staking the claim to belong to, or at least follow immediately after, the established global fashion centres: Paris, London, New York, Milan and (sometimes) Tokyo.

However, the Danish government's growing interest in and efforts to shape the Danish fashion industry cannot be understood only, even or primarily, as an investment in future fashion jobs or export earnings. Our analysis of the encounter between government and fashion in Denmark detailed three moments of translation: first, the definition the emergence of designer fashion on the conditions of complete outsourcing and the translation of the clothing/fashion industry from sunset industry to an avowed success story. Second, representing fashion as a linchpin in mediating between industrial and cultural policy. And thirdly, consolidating these processes and driving the government's agenda through the network organization Danish Fashion Institute and a series of further initiatives.

If we are to describe the model of cultural industry policy pursued by the Danish government(s) in Keane and Zhang's (2008) terms, it seems to fall somewhere in between a 'growth model' and 'creative economy model', although neither fully captures the rationale behind the Danish fashion industry policy. Investments (in terms of funding, policy measures and attention) is justified not so much through either effects in facilitating growth in other sectors (except from branding Denmark) or igniting innovation, as establishing fashion as a beacon shown other industries and nation the (government's) path to prosperity in a globalized economy. But as suggested, we have doubts about the extent to which economic objectives, rationales, calculations and analysis can explain the Danish government's 'enlistment' of fashion in the service of building the creative nation. As noted, the statistics that construct fashion as Denmark's fourth largest export industry, or at least, the

way the figures are used to represent Danish fashion as Danish and as fashion and as a success story, are highly dubious. As Bennett (2001) suggests, the categories whereby we might understand the objectives and rationales behind cultural policy overlap. While government policy towards creative industries tends to emphasize (and be explained and justified by) economic goals and discourses, our case suggests that the symbolic and social aspects are at work beneath the economic rationales and rationalizations. We might analyze policies towards fashion as attempts to demonstrate political authority and vision (symbolic in Bennett), as scheme to develop creative subjects (social in Bennett's terms), or as national identity project (symbolic in Bennett, political/ideological and nationalist in Pratt). We explored the latter in some detail in section 8.

Finally, we have touched upon the degree and nature of government's involvement in culture and the cultural/creative industries. In the case, the Danish government has gradually come to exercise a significant influence on the Danish fashion industry, without much interference with or intervention in the fashion and clothing market. While Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey's typology is arguably not as relevant or applicable to public policy towards creative industries as towards support of the arts, we might discuss whether the Danish government adheres to arm's length's principles. The role of Danish Fashion Institute is interesting in this respect. The organization is formally independent, but it depends heavily on government funding for its survival. Since government funding is tied closely to various agendas defined by politician and economic strategist, the autonomy of the institute is restricted. The agenda of government draws heavily on fashionable management concepts, such as 'the experience economy', 'user-driven innovation', and 'corporate social responsibility'. Its project to identify and exploit national cultural values and distinctiveness in the creative industries appears nationalistic, narcissistic and somewhat passé. We might question, whether these ideas represent viable paths forward for (all) Danish-based fashion companies. If the government insists on pushing its agenda mindlessly onto the Danish fashion industry, or using fashion to push it to other Danish industries, the narrative of Danish fashion's success might be harder to sustain in the future. But so far, the industry seems to have reveled more in the government's recognition than concerned itself about its cooptation of Danish fashion.

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- <sup>i</sup> For clarification of the definition of, differences between and politics of labelling the cultural and creative industries see Pratt (2005) and O'Connor (2007).
- <sup>ii</sup> Based on 2003-numbers the fashion industry's (e.g. the export of clothing, textile and leather goods) export profit was 30 billion DKK making it the fourth biggest manufacturing export industry next to the medical industry as the third biggest (export profit of 32,1 billion DKK), the agricultural industry as the second biggest (export profit of 67,9 billion DKK) and the electronic and machine industry as the biggest (export profit of 92,1 billion DKK)(FORA 2005:14).
- <sup>iii</sup> Bestseller A/S (estab. 1979) had in 2007 an annual turnover of 10,4 billion DKK and employed in Denmark 2.654 persons. The company represents ten different fashion brands for children, women's and men's wear and did in 2007 run 1.740 own concept stores (www.bestseller.com).
- <sup>iv</sup> BTX Group A/S (estab. 2005 when the capital fund EQT bought the company Brandtex A/S, estab. 1935) had in 2008 an annual turnover of 3,194 billion DKK and employs 1.593 people. The company represents 19 different fashion brands for teenagers, women's and men's wear (www.btx-group.dk).
- <sup>v</sup> IC Companies A/S (estab. 2001 by the merge of the fashion company InWear A/S (estab. 1969) and Carli Gry International A/S (estab. 1973)). The company represents 11 different fashion brands for women's and men's wear. In 2006 the company's annual turnover was 3,023 billion DKK, it employed 2.200 people and did run 259 concept stores. The company is publicly listed on Copenhagen Stock Exchange (www.iccompanies.dk).
- <sup>vi</sup> Due to Deloitte report on the Danish fashion industry from 2008, 32 percent of the Danish fashion companies has 4-9 full-time employees (Deloitte 2008:17).
- <sup>vii</sup> The fashion fair changed its name due to the takeover of the planning and administration by the trade organization Federation of Danish Textile & Clothing in 1993. Previously the fashion fair was run by an independent organization associated to the trade organization (Melchior 2008).
- <sup>viii</sup> Interview by Marie Riegels Melchior with Jan Carlsen, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005.
- <sup>ix</sup> The initiative group when it was formed in 2004 consisted of five persons: a fashion investor (Annelise Ryberg), a fashion journalist (Frederik Bjerregaard), a fashion designer and promoter (Rasmus Nordqvist), a fashion magazine editor (Ane Lyng) and a fashion photography agent (Thomas Hargreave). By 2005 it has changed into a group of three persons: the fashion magazine editor, the fashion photography agent and the newcomer and later director of the organization, a project manager, fashion TV anchor and magazine editor, Eva Kruse.
- <sup>x</sup> Field notes made by Marie Riegels Melchior as participant at the founding meeting of Danish Fashion Institute, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005.
- <sup>xi</sup> In 2006 Danish Fashion Institute was economically supported by the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs by 500.000 DKK for planning of seminar activities and by the National Agency for Enterprise and Construction by 1.5 billion DKK in order to establish and run a think tank for the Danish fashion industry. In 2007 by 100.000 DKK from the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs to host a seminar on corporate social responsibility in the fashion industry. And in 2008 by 226.000 DKK from the Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs to host a seminar on implementing user driven innovation in the fashion industry and by 1.8 million DKK by the local government of Copenhagen to during the next three years to support initiatives in relation to Copenhagen Fashion Week (Interview by Marie Riegels Melchior with Director Eva Kruse, Danish Fashion Institute, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008).
- <sup>xii</sup> MOKO (da. Modekonsortiet) was established in February 2006 on the initiative of The Danish Design School Head of Research, Thomas Schødt Rasmussen. As PhD candidate at The Danish Design School writing of the Danish fashion industry, Marie Riegels Melchior was appointed to write parts of the report in collaboration with Nikolina Olsen-Rule, at the time Research Assistant at The Danish Design School.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Interview by Marie Riegels Melchior with Director Eva Kruse, Danish Fashion Institute, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008.
- <sup>xiv</sup> See note x. The founding of the "Fashion zone" has been said to be 17 million DKK, which is partly given by the Ministry of Economics and Business Affairs and partly by other government

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organization with an interest in promoting the Danish cultural and experience economy (Press release from the Ministry of Economics and Business Affairs, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008).