

Creativity at Work:

# The Role of Fairs in the Development and Division of Fields

CPH Kids and Danish Children's  
Fashion

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# Abstract

During the Copenhagen Fashion Week A/W 2010, CPH Kids opened as the first independent trade fair for children's clothing. Despite considerable resistance, the fair managed to establish itself and challenge the established order by providing a venue devoted fully to children's clothing and luring away exhibitors and visitors looking for change. In this paper, we analyze the dynamic development and distinctive traits of the children's clothing sector symbolized at the new fair. Our study contributes to inquiry into the role of fairs and festivals in the creative industries by examining the special case of coinciding, competing trade fairs. We introduce and build on three closely related, but in our view complementary, concepts applied and developed in analyses of festivals, trade shows and other kinds of temporary, usually competitive events, namely tournament rituals, field configuring events and tournaments of value. We establish the common ground of the three approaches, particular their assertion of the rich research potential and vital significance of festivals, fairs and similar events for many fields, whether deemed creative or not. We also single out particular strengths of each approach, which inform our inquiry. They review of theory, points to how existing work has explored fairs as arenas of conflict between exhibitors as well as the rivalry between events separated in time and/or place. In our case, we demonstrate how the emergence of a rival fair both incites and exposes division or segmentation of a field. This observation in our view, challenges prevailing understandings of the relationship between fields and the events, we assume represent and shape them. We argue that it is more complicated than extant theory suggests, and this has implications for the analysis of the fairs and to their role in configuring field. We raise questions about the precise manner in and extent to which events configure field, and point to the agency of event organizers, the fair context and the fair as medium as factors that need to be factored in.

The reflections on the field configuring capacity of fairs and similar event, inform our explorations of Danish childrenswear. Following the tournament of value-approach, we place values - more specifically how different values are affirmed and negotiated at the fairs - at the center of our analysis. The approach suggests, that symbolic value, and ultimately the (economic) value exchange value, of cultural products are established through judgments of their technical/material, social, situational, appreciative and utility values. However, we do not focus as much on specific evaluative practices in the field, as the cultural values and norms around which childhood is constructed. These values are vital for the field of children's clothing, so we address contemporary concerns about childhood placing a particular emphasis on the Nordic context with its the notion of "the competent child". While our analysis only offers only selected snapshots of the many activities at the two fairs, we have pointed to some of the ways in which positions are staked, values are addressed, forms of capital built and exchanged, and different field configuring mechanisms operate. We conclude, that while further research is required to gauge the field configuring impact of CPH Kids and explore the values, identities and structures of Danish children's fashion in more depth, our investigation points to the field dividing impact that fairs might have.

## **The Role of Fairs in the Development and Division of Fields CPH Kids and Danish Children's Fashion**

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### **Theory of Festivals and Fairs in Creative Industries**

In this paper, we contribute to recent efforts to explain the role of fairs, festivals and similar events as institutions of economic and cultural exchange of special significance to – and of great interest to those studying – the creative industries. We will review – and frame our inquiry in terms of – three connected concepts applied and developed in analyses of festivals, trade shows and other kinds of temporary, usually competitive events, namely **tournament rituals**, **field configuring events** and **tournaments of value**. The three concepts represent partly overlapping approaches, which draw on some of the same key ideas, texts (including each other) and research streams, yet have distinct foci and yield different insights. We will therefore address all three, building on their common ground in our survey of core issues in the study of events in question (definitions, significance and problems) and singling out themes and analyses in each of them of particular pertinence to our study.

The first point on which the three conceptual perspectives on fair, festival and similar events, is the insistence that such sites represent particularly fertile sites for the study of the emergence and transformation of markets, products and industries – whether designated as creative and not. Social gatherings of this kind tend to bring together a broad range of relevant actors and organizations in the same place over a short span of

time, providing researchers with unmatched opportunities for participant observation and practitioner interaction and potentially large quantity and richness of data on the field under survey. Moreover, these events and sites tend to host, reveal or even stimulate developments that turn out to have lasting impact on their fields. They are both convenient research locations – microcosms of fields where key actors, relationships, positions and values appear condensed in time and space – but also sites of heightened strategic importance for a field – zones where changes are likely to happen or surface and be negotiated. Witnessing, documenting and analyzing how these events unfold is crucial for understanding the make up and evolution of fields. Considering the vast number of fairs, award ceremonies, exhibitions, etc.; the attention they command, not to mention the research opportunities they present and the impact they appear to have; they remain a scantily studied phenomena in most disciplines.

What then defines the different kinds of social gatherings, addressed as field configuring events or tournaments of kind? Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen (2010) aptly summarize them as spatially temporarily and socially bounded and functionally unbounded. Fairs and festivals are of limited duration and recur at regular intervals, depending on the customs and conditions of the field. They take place in designated, circumscribed locations – venues, sites or spaces – that are decorated, refitted or specifically designed to host such events. The spaces are organized to regulate access and facilitate performances and displays of products and ideas, as well as the status and identity of people, organizations, and industries. They also facilitate social interaction and bring together an array of participants with different positions in and relations to an organizational field. They are functional unbounded in the sense that they serve multiple purposes. Lampel and Meyer (2008, p.1026) reel off a list: “...networks are constructed, business cards are exchanged, reputations are advanced, deals are struck, news is shared, accomplishments are recognized, standards are set, and dominant designs are selected”.

The notion of tournament, which both Anand (Anand & Watson 2004; Anand & Jones 2008) and Moeran (Moeran 1993; Moeran & Strandgaard Pedersen 2010) adopt from Appadurai (1986), accentuates the competitive nature of fairs and festivals, but also their historical roots, cross-cultural appeal and ritual nature. Anand & Watson develop the

ritual dimension further, extracting and applying three distinct theses from sociology and anthropology on the meaning and function of ritual to their case study of the Grammy awards. Each represents different filters through which tournament rituals – including, we argue, fashion fairs – may be viewed. We will therefore briefly introduce the three perspectives. The solidarity thesis addresses the ways in which rituals forge social coherence, order and control. Working through symbolic stylized routines and customary practices that foster individual experiences of social euphoria, rituals manage to reproduce collective beliefs and communion. The agonistic thesis departs from the idea that rituals primarily affirm unity, insisting that they reveal rifts and conflicts of interest within social groups. In this view, rituals are vehicles through which dominant groups assert and legitimize their positions, but also occasions at which subordinate social groups may express dissent and challenge the prevailing order. According to the sense-making perspective, ritual works largely through providing shared models and understandings of social reality. Rituals help establish the categories and classifications, through which social actors establish meaning and construct reality – and hence become vital in reproducing as well as reshaping social and cultural environments or fields (62). Anand & Watson (2004) remain open to all three perspectives, in their effort to explain the impact of tournament rituals on the evolution of organizational fields. In our analysis, we take a similar stance and remain mindful to the different interpretive stances each represents.

Anand and his co-authors are interested in the ways in which award ceremonies and prizes shape the evolution of fields. Tournament rituals have field configuring potential, but certain criteria or mechanisms need to be in place for them to fulfil that potential. They must enable interaction and communication, provide a sense of common purpose, facilitate structures of domination and allow for transformation of capital. If we apply the concept of field configuring events (Lampel & Meyer 2008), we seem to sidestep such concerns. We assume a priori that the events under analysis are products and drivers of field evolution.

The concepts and analysis of tournament rituals and field configuring events both derive from institutional approaches in organizational studies, management and strategy. The primary aim of this line of inquiry is to understand the sources and dynamics of change in

industries, markets, and technologies. The pursuit of field configuring mechanisms is part of a theoretical project to offer alternative explanations to the evolutions of fields by associating them with localized and discontinuous development, rather than the general and continuous processes conventional theory has been preoccupied with (Lampel & Meyer 2008). Lampel and Meyer (2008) tie their analysis of field configuring events closely to evolutionary phases of fields. Fields in their incipient phase give rise to events, which in turn work back on the field shaping its cognitive, normative and social structure. So at this juncture, the role of events is mainly linking up a disparate set of individuals and organizations, forging a common meaning system: establishing standards, codes and norms of practice, and seeking to define the field against other fields and institutions (1028-29). The idea behind early field configuring events may come from different sources: 'institutional entrepreneurs' with an eye to shape field evolution to their own advantage may be the driving force; it might be mainly a matter of certain actors mimicking established fields, or external actors may be instrumental making them happen (ibid.). Lampel and Meyer point out that field configuring events may have weak or strong mandates to exercise influence on the future of the field. Events with the backing of key actors or some kind of formal authority will have a strong mandate. Others organizers might have a weak field mandate, but in neither case is the outcome and impact of events certain.

As fields mature, the roles of field configuring events change. They turn their focus toward field replication; expanding and refining existing structures, legitimizing dominant norms and values, protecting and reinforcing field identity and boundaries. While noting that field configuring events also can be scenes of disputes within fields, they do elaborate on the agonistic dimension, to the same extent as for instance Anand and Watson (2004), who suggest that events (in this case the Grammy Awards) represents "a medium and outcome of conflict within... [its] field" (p.68). Marginal groups may seek recognition or rival fraction, each with their visions and values, may clash. The agonistic element, we might add, extends beyond the confines of specific field configuring events. As fields evolve, multiple events arise each with some claim to represent the field and ambition to shape its development. All events are not attended to equally; how many and

who attends them over time determines their status within the fields and, in turn, their role in configuring them. This obviously complicates the relationship between field and field configuring event, and should inform our “readings” of events and assessment of the how they configure and impact upon fields.

The tournament of values-approach, as developed by Moeran & Strandgaard Pedersen (2011), distinguishes itself from the two others, by addressing explicitly the role of fairs and festivals in the creative industries and – as the name suggest – by placing the analysis of different forms of value at the center of their explanation of the role and functions of fairs and festivals. In their analysis, ‘tournaments’ provide venues for the negotiation and affirmation of the different values that underpin particular fields. They argue that the exchange value of cultural products is determined with reference to a set of symbolic values, which they break down into technical/material, social, situational, appreciative and utility or use values. These, we might directly relate to the processes of presentation and evaluation of product and brands that take place among participants (exhibitors, buyers, journalist, publicists) at the fairs. But as we will suggest, the value negotiations must be connected to broader social and cultural values.

### **Field Configuring Events in the Fashion Industry**

The fashion industry has been acknowledged as a creative industry in many countries. In many western societies, the industry is characterized by an almost complete absence of actual production (Skov ....) In Denmark the fashion industry has even been single out among the creative industries as an: ‘exemplary industry in showing the way to respond to globalisation’ (Riegels Melchior et al.) As companies focus on design and marketing and other activities highly dependant on creative labour, the importance of fashion fairs as cultural and social events has increased. In the fashion industry change and newness has been highly institutionalises for decades due to the fixation on changing seasons, and fashion weeks are the events that mark these raptures. Hierarchies of the fashion world are acted out at these events, strict divisions between insiders and outsiders are established and in turn, fashion weeks produce, reproduce and legitimise the field

(Entwistle and Rocamora 2006, Skov 2006). Fashion weeks are now occurring all over the world with the Paris, Milan, New York and London Fashion Weeks regarded as the most influential. Other fashion weeks that wish to be added to the fashion calendar must humbly adjust to the hierarchy. The number of fashion weeks now occurring all over the world each season is now so great that it would be impossible to arrange everyone into a single calendar. Although the aforementioned have a global audience, other fairs may have a large regional importance. Likewise the national fairs are still instrumental in the configuration of the local fashion industry.

Most of the literature on fairs is concerned with how negotiations of values or configuration happen *within* the fairs. As Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen argue one feature of fairs is that they are spatially bound (2011:4). Taking that as a constituting starting point for the investigation of fairs, negotiations are confined to the specific location. In many cases fashion fairs are divided into numerous venues. Furthermore, many actors participating in configuring the field or defining values are absent from the fairs. Besides challenging the notion of spatial boundness, it questions the elevated position of fairs as field configuring. Some of the largest producers and sellers of children's clothing such as H&M never participate in the fairs. Other important brands like Benetton or Burberry open up showrooms over the duration of the fair and sell from there.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, you could argue, the fair is as much a 'state of mind' as it is a physical situated event. Others have explored the boundaries of the fair, and the *inside* and *outside* of the event (Entwistle and Rocamora). In this case, as well as other notable ones, the actors not present at the fair do not constitute an outside, since dates of the fair are respected and they rely on the fair to attract buyers.<sup>2</sup> The point we want to argue is that the fair is a concept configuring the field through representation and promotion of certain values as well as an actual spatially bound event. Absent actors are not the only properties of fairs that challenge the spatially bound-ness of them: In many fairs there are multiple

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<sup>1</sup> Being a fully integrated supplier, manufacturer and retailer H&M has little to gain at least economically from participating in the fair. They have however participated in adult fashion weeks by staging events for the sole purpose of promoting the collection, or doing events outside the fashion week calendar.

<sup>2</sup> It is notable however, that in some cases the brands that are not represented at the fair often exhibit at other fairs such as Piti Bambini in Florence.



venues that are internally competing. In fashion fairs and even excluding show or event venues most are divided into several venues. This of course needs not create any tension provided the venues are merely extensions of the original. In many fairs, however, this is not the case.

## **Copenhagen Fashion Fairs**

The development during the last 15 years at the Copenhagen Fashion Week demonstrates a common tendency of fashion fairs towards greater divisions. For a long period, in Denmark nearly 40 years, the industrial fair venues with their rational layout and access to infrastructure made up the only site of the fashion fair. All the brands exhibited in one very large venue, designated to hosting fairs. The first to break out were the street wear brands and a new fair was organised in an urban environment right at the centre of Copenhagen. In Paris much the same happen when smaller fairs opened in the Marais quarter. In both cases the new fairs were smaller in size, and profited from the backdrop of metropolitan areas. Smaller venues have become more popular and more brands even resort to showrooms instead of fairs. The growing interest in smaller fairs and the division of many fashion fairs goes hand in hand with the development in fashion branding in recent years. In general terms there has been a move towards a more holistic understanding of the brand. Generally during the last 20 years fashion brands have become much more orientated towards creating experiences conceptually aligning the collections, shops and advertising. The need for coherence in brand representation may well have incited the move to smaller or at least diversified venues. With a variety of smaller venues it became easier for exhibitors to find a fair with an image that corresponds with that of the exhibitor's brand. Since the fairs are solely for shop owners and buyers, end-costumers are not there to experience any misrepresentation. However, there is a growing concern with expressing a congruent brand values through all aspects of representation.

The recent history of the current 6 venues at the Copenhagen Fashion Week, is one of discontentment with existing conditions and resulting fractionalization. It seems that physical conditions as well as symbolic value play equal parts. Over the years this has

created a whole set of problems, worst of all confusing potential buyers. Struggling for the symbolic 'upper hand' is not the only disruption. Since 2006 A new fair equivocally called 'Un-fair' has rallied to raise awareness of environmental and ethical issues in the fashion industry by exclusively exhibiting organic, fair-trade or otherwise environmentally friendly clothing. Often the environmental stance is presented as an opposition to fashion, and that in it self creates tension.<sup>3</sup> The fair started as a protest against the commercialisation of fashion in Denmark as a couple of rather rough stalls outside one of the other venues, and has grown into its own. The name itself of course is a brisk comment on the concept of fairs. The desire to break with the format of industrial fairs can be seen as a part of this larger move, but in this case also demonstrates a break with some of the values fairs in the fashion industry normally represent. Furthermore the name connotes the unfair distribution of resources worldwide.

The first to break out in 1998 the Copenhagen Vision established a street wear platform and as mentioned took advantage of the location in the centre of town. The division made even more apparent the differences between companies concerned primarily with price and the design driven companies (Riegels Melchior et al. 2009). After the establishment of the Gallery Fair some years later, a fair designated to bringing 'high fashion' into the Copenhagen fashion Week, Copenhagen Vision has rebranded itself, now divided in two venues, one 'contemporary woman's wear' one 'sport street denim'. The new venue is an old railway building and houses the heritage brands.

### **Children's Clothing gets its Own Fair**

In the face of considerable resistance, CPH Kids opened in February 2010 as the first independent trade fair for children's clothing under the Copenhagen Fashion Week. Childrenswear had previously been exhibited in a separate section of the Copenhagen International Fashion Fair (CIFF) at the Bella Center, the major trade fair and convention complex close to airport and the rising edge city of Ørestad on the outskirts of

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<sup>3</sup> This is not the time or place to unravel the conflict between the two, but it is a point often raised especially by those trying to mediate (Green fashion etc)

Copenhagen. The new fair was held in one of the old bottling halls of Carlsberg's historical brewery plant, much of which was in the process of being converted to host cultural events and creative businesses after the company moved its beer production out of the Copenhagen's Valby-district. The inside of the new venue TAP 2 stood in stark contrast to space in which the CIFF fairs were held. The Bella Center consists of multiple interconnected modern and functional exhibition halls each containing hundreds of stands during the fashion week. The scale and site of CPH Kids, two adjoining refurbished production buildings with a combined 3100 m<sup>2</sup> floor space and some 50 stands, made it much more intimate and calm. The stands with their colorful signs, whimsical logos, and dress racks with sample collections of small pieces of clothing brought a sense of warmth to the austerity of the stripped production space with its raw concrete floor. A café area with tables made of reused railway sleepers added coolness.

The main force behind the new fair was Lone Holm. A former international fashion model and mother of two young children, she had left her job as a coordinator of international corporate events for companies like Nokia and Danish-based global pharmaceutical Novo Nordisk, to start the fair. Holm was brought in by her husband Laust Christian Poulsen, who owned TAP 1, the company appointed by Carlsberg's property development arm, to make the two old bottling halls into one of Copenhagen prime exhibition and event venues. In 2009, TAP1 had been approached by a group of children clothing companies who were interesting in having another place to exhibit at the Copenhagen Fashion Week. The group expressed various concerns with the ways in CIFF Kids was run, including pricing, preferential treatment of larger exhibitors, poor service and facility. The companies felt that there was a need for a new vision, a new type of fair which was more in tune with their ideas of children's wear.

After the initial meeting, TAP1 took the first steps towards setting up the new fair. However, the process came to a halt when rumors of the meeting and the new initiative reached wider circles. Some of the participating companies backed off and denied that they had been involved. For a while, it seemed the plans for the new fair had to be abandoned in the face of efforts to suppress the "rebellion", goad stray exhibitors back in the CIFF fold and keep the children's exhibition together. But then the core group returned

to TAP1 and suggested that interest persisted and insisted that they should push forward. Under considerable time pressure, Holm and the TAP1 team preceded to set-up the alternative fair. The uncertainty and delays meant that exhibition had to be held at the TAP2 the smaller of the two exhibition halls.

The organization behind CIFF gave the new competitor an icy reception, refusing to acknowledge or collaborate with CPH Kids. It responded to the new competitor with bringing in improved catering facilities and splashed out on a grand children's fashion show. It refused the free shuttle service to the CPH Kids access to the Bella Center, making visitors who wanted to use the service walk off the premises to be picked up.

Nevertheless the new exhibition succeeded in attracting almost 3000 buyers according to the organizers and some of the most prolific names in Danish childrenswear decided to go exhibit there. Half a year later the second CPH Kids opened in the larger TAP1 exhibition space with some 50 percent more exhibitors suggesting that the new fair had come to stay and will become a permanent fixture at the Copenhagen Fashion Fair.

How do we make sense of the childrenswear's sequestering at and subsequent partial exodus from CIFF in terms of field configuring events?

This brings us back to the issue of how an event constitutes – encapsulates and shapes – a field. There are a number of possible ways of interpreting the birth of CPH Kids, relating it to fields and anticipating its long term field configuring potential. We might consider five interpretive approaches:

**A field apart.** In this interpretation, we consider the emergence of CPH Kids as evidence of the distinctiveness of children's fashion. It constitutes a more or less autonomous field, which is in the process of distancing itself from the venue of grown-up clothing business – where it does not belong. The independent trade fair expresses a deep-rooted symbolic boundary between grown-up and children's clothing and manifests and is likely to reinforce the distinct identity, institutions and values of the latter.

**A field is born.** A slightly different take, suggests that CPH Kids is a critical juncture marking, if not the birth of Danish children's fashion, than its coming of age as a separate field. The emergence of an independent children's fashion fair, in bringing together a

group of pioneers of a new Danish or Nordic philosophy of children's clothing showcases and is likely to shape the new field.

**A field divided.** Rather than seeing it as a step towards gradual recognition or enactment of children's fashion as a more or less distinct field, we might construe the birth of CPH Kids as expression of a conflicting views and interest, and fragmentation within the Danish childrenswear sector. We might point different assessments of the role of CIFF and other institutions in the Danish clothing industry, among exhibitors who stayed and left, but also conflicting interests, values and visions for the field.

**A subfield evolution.** We have so far focused on trade fairs as unit of analysis and speculated on whether their field configuring impact vis a vis children's clothing as a distinct field. But we might also move up a level and consider Copenhagen Fashion Week as whole as a field configuring event for Danish fashion. The different fashion shows, trade fairs and other activities then, constitute elements that reflect subfields or categories within the field of (Danish) fashion. The emergence and recognition of CPH Kids as part of the Copenhagen Fashion Week parallels the previous instances where rival venues (CPH Vision and Gallery) emerged to represent categories (streetwear and designer fashion) that – in the eye of some – did not fit well in at CIFF. The immediate field configuring impact of CPH Kids on the field of Danish fashion as a whole, is, if not negligible, then so limited that we might question whether it qualifies as a field configuring event per se.

**The field of fairs.** Extended a skeptical view of what qualifies as a field configuring event, we might argue that case of CPH Kids is more a matter of fair business. As we have seen, what seems to have fuelled and triggered the break away of exhibitors from CIFF was grievances with the product and prices at CIFF more than any desire to divide or otherwise reshape the field or subfield of childrenswear. Encouraging a new venue to provide an alternative made business sense for some exhibitors, even those that decided to stay CIFF and reap the benefits of the incumbent's efforts to hold onto its exhibitors and position. This of course points to the agency of fair organizers, in enabling and shaping developments in fields. This is a matter to which we shall return.

## Negotiating Values and Identities in Children's Fashion

As mentioned earlier, we follow the tournament of value-approach (Moeran & Strandgaard Pedersen 2011) in viewing fairs and similar events as venues for the negotiation and affirmation of the different values that underpin particular fields. The symbolic value, and ultimately the (economic) value exchange value, of cultural products are established through judgments of their technical/material, social, situational, appreciative and utility values. These, we might directly relate to the processes of presentation and evaluation of product and brands that take place among participants (exhibitors, buyers, journalist, publicists) at the children's fairs. But in assessing the significance of the emergence of independent children's clothing fair, we need to view these values in the frame of cultural discourses of childhood.

In our preliminary reflections on the field configuring function and potential of CPH Kids, we questioned what might be read into the emergence of separate children's clothing section (at CIFF) and, subsequently, an independent children's fair (CPH Kids). We implied that these developments reflect a culturally-rooted symbolic boundary between children and adult spheres that explains why children's clothing might be regarded as a distinct field. Before turning to a closer look at how values are expressed and negotiated at children's fairs, we will look at constructions of childhood and its connection to clothing practices, (including uses, designs and discourses) with a particular focus on the Nordic context.

Scholars have argued that a distinctively modern idea of childhood emerged between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century (Prout et al. 2008). A hallmark of this constitution of childhood is a heightened separation from adulthood, which gradually became manifested division between children and adult sphere and social spaces. Cultural norms held that children belonged in the private confines of homes or specialized institutions such as the school, not unguarded in public space or in work places in paid employment. By the nineteenth century children were widely considered "as innocent, ignorant, dependent, vulnerable, incompetent and in need of protection and disciplining" (Prout et al. 2008, p. 23).

In the modern conception, childhood is often cast in terms of a culture and nature-dichotomy and alternation gravitated between the two, for instance in Rousseau's romantic views of the child and the Darwin-inspired Child Study movement.

The changing ideas of childhood are detectable the history of children's clothing. Torell (2010) offers a periodization of children's clothing which expresses shifting ideas and values, influenced in part by expert discourses on childhood, but also by socio-economic, technological and cultural developments. She links trends in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century towards simplicity and plain, comfortable clothes allowing free movement, to philosophers like Locke and Rousseau and physicists' advice. Later children's clothing designs turned more elaborate and decorative as the dress of children became a means to conspicuously display family wealth. Health and hygiene and later child development concerns influenced children's clothes in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century profoundly. Since the 1930s, the rise of the ready-to-wear clothing and the influence of popular culture and advertising have given birth to the fashion conscious child. As Torell (2010, p. 467) notes "[c]hildren's clothing has always been debated in moral terms", and in debates of contemporary childhood (in Western Europe and North America), we find a set of recurring themes or moral problems. These include the targeting of children as consumers (in branding, by the cultural industries), or, the commodification of childhood (Cook 2007); global disparities in lives of children (Langer 2004) and the sexualizing of girl's clothes (Torell 2004). In the eye of concerned observers, all threaten to move, narrow or even undermine boundaries between adult and children worlds, endangering childhood innocence or even childhood itself. While such concerns are present in the Scandinavian context, debates and understandings of contemporary childhood in region's welfare societies are perhaps captured in the idea of the "competent child" (Brembeck et. al. 2004). The Nordic countries tend to consider themselves at the forefront of development towards children's rights and quality of life – and have a track record to back it in terms of legislation and state programs. The notion of the competent child suggests a view of children as "reflexive, autonomous and robust" and capable of interacting with adults on equal terms, entitled to participate in decision-making (from household purchases to custody), taking responsibility as well as enduring the pressures of modern lives

(including dual career families, shared custody, long hours in day-care or school and after-school institutions, etc.).

While the idea of the competent child is firmly established and institutionalized in the Nordic societies, they are not unproblematic. The tensions, dilemmas and uncertainties exist concerning adult authority and responsibility as well as the limits to children's choice, agency and participation (Brembeck et. al. 2004).

Such issues form a backdrop to our examination of how values are negotiated and the field reveals itself at the children's fairs.

### **Venues and spatial differentiation**

As we have noted above, the two fair venues themselves represent the evolution within fashion fairs. The old fair is located outside the city and is easily accessed and part of a designated fair facility. The new fair venue is smaller and located within the city in an old industrial area that is slowly being turned into a creative centre housing offices institutions and apartments. The interior of the CIFF fair is themed differently for each fair and feature a variety of signs and banners but up by exhibitors. In contrast, the CPH Kids venue is dominated by uniform floating wall with no signs or banners, there are no themed decorations but a variety of smaller features like trend installations, artworks and signs communicating environmental concern. The two environments represent different spatial frame. The Carlsberg plant and TAP exhibition space thus in a double sense distances itself from the adult and more commercial end of fashion present at the Bella Center and CIFF.

### **Childrenswear brands**

The brands that are exhibiting at the fairs express specific concepts of childhood through designs and visual material that accompany the clothes such as look books, press material and websites. They represent a large spectrum of values that only partly correspond with those explicitly communicated by the fairs. In that sense there is an ongoing negotiation of



the dominant values, and as earlier described, this may cause exhibitors to favour a certain fair. But even within a particular fair, exhibitors generally accept that the fair may express different or even contradictory understandings of childhood. The following are four examples of brands exhibiting at the same fair, CPH Kids, representing rather different concepts of childhood.

One of the most successful Danish childrenswear brands of the past decade, Katvig literally revolutionized the market for children's wear in Denmark. With a playful logo and printed fabrics the brand created a huge following, of consumers as well as other brands, and a new style was created that evoked a 70s feel with distinctive colours and unisex styles in velvet and corduroy. In the words of the owner, the brand was created because children's clothes at that time were 'grown-up clothes in small sizes'. The division between childhood and adulthood is expressed clearly through styles, images and press material. Children should be allowed to be children and their clothes should be functional, straightforward and whole some. In their particular vision of childhood, environmental and health issues play a large role. The tag-line of the company is 'for the love of earth' underlining the environmental aspect and not that it produces childrenswear.

Molo Kids and louie louis are two of the brands exhibiting at the new fair. They represent a postmodern eclectic image of childhood. Urban and messy but mixed with romantic references to the dream of a past childhood in the country. The mix does not necessarily have to be beautiful; mainly it expresses a softening or relativization of the often monolithic image of childhood presented by other brands. Childhood, like all other things is made of beautiful, ugly, romantic, rough, subtle and loud things. In designs, prints, photographs and graphics these brands approach 'real-ness' through this complex fusion. Molo Kids and Louielouis built on the notion that the clothes make room for the children's creativity and approach children in their own right.

Another Danish brand that joined the new fair from the beginning is Norlie. With its natural and suave colours and materials in simple and stringent designs, Norlie expresses a much more coherent and uniform image, which expresses the innocence of childhood with a sense of seriousness that does not project the messy and eclectic everyday world of Molo Kids. Building on a modern Scandinavian design tradition of clarity and

functionality Norlie conveys the classic understanding of the conservative up-bringing, being 'brought up' to be adults protected from the complexity and disorder of contemporary life.

## Events

At the August CPH Kids fair there was a live photo shoot every day where different children's photographers demonstrated their skills and took a number of photos that were later presented at the website. The event created a lively atmosphere in an otherwise quiet corner of the venue, but it also embodied the aspiration for authenticity important to the fair organizers. In stead of only presenting images, this event invites the audience into the process of making fashion images highlighting the constant change of fashion, but also underlines the transparency that is part of the fair concept. The images that has later been made available online, represent a variety of expressions of being a child and of children's fashion. Some express the feeling of loneliness sometimes associated with childhood, some use poses from adult fashion photography and other demonstrate playfulness.

The show presented at the CIFF Kids fair and on the website display the four trends that the organizers have chosen for the season. A group of child models parade clothes from the exhibitors styled according to the trends and do small performances; dancing, jumping, playing or form tableaux. In some cases the model the clothes in the same manners as adult models. In the final part of the show, a particular song is played in its entirety while a girl model dances and lip-syncs the words. This part draws on the format of music videos and presents the children in the role of adults. While the girl sings about 'a bad romance' dancers twist their bodies against the wall and the lyrics go: 'walk walk passion baby'.

The performance exhibits how children sometimes take on adult roles and consequently can be viewed as an innocent play on everyday situations where children 'act out' popular culture expressions without recognizing the particular content of that performance. It can however also be seen as an expression of the erosion of the boundaries between childhood and adulthood where similar popular cultural phenomenon are shared to a greater extend, or as an example of the increasing sexualisation of children.

## Media representations

Both fairs publish a magazine or a booklet with a list of exhibitors' facilities and programs, accompanied by features on trends, food and things to do. The magazines clearly express some of the underlying values of the fairs.

In the CPH Kids magazine, 'On the kids' terms' seems to be the underlying approach. The front cover represents fashion as dress-up. It creates a distance; fashion should not be taken too serious, but also that clothes are fun. The child features is cute and playful. Recycled paper underlines sustainability and colours to add a creative twist. The layout is simple and exhibitors are presented in a systematic manner with space for notes next to each name presenting the magazine as a work tool for buyers. Through out the magazine features on photographers, trends, fun stuff, illustrators and the location it self creates an eclectic and creative contrast to the simplicity of the layout. The features present a variety of topics relevant to the fair positioning it in a field of artist, designers, magazines, cultural commentary, ethical considerations and fashion. This variety of topics demonstrates the organizer's explicitly holistic approach to the children's fashion fairs. The feature on seasonal trends only presents two stylistic trends, the others are moral or behavioral trends: 'let kids be kids, let go of the rains and let the kids choose for themselves, think sustainably' (magazine 2010: 84). Later in the magazine, however, there is a feature presenting a trend forecast from the editors of the magazine 'Kid's Wear', one of the fairs media partners, which is orientated entirely on stylistic trends.

The CIFF Kids magazine is presented in the form of a fashion magazine. The front cover is glossy and features a single child model much in the way an adult fashion magazine would. Fashion is taken seriously, and the child is presented as a confident individual, warding of the gaze of the reader by meeting it straight on. Although the style of the clothes is obviously that of a child's wardrobe (a large bow and white bunnies on the dotted shirt), the child is not represented as innocent and cute. The content however resembles that of the CPH Kids magazine. At the beginning of the magazine, the trends of the coming season are presented. The trends are presented through images and words that together create a stylistic concept of moods, colours and designs. Unlike the presentation

in the CPH kids magazines, these are all devoted to stylistic trends and only vaguely touch on moral or cultural matters.

The fair websites are extensions of the magazines, but where CIFF Kids features information on the fair and the selected trends, together with commercial content from exhibitors and partners, CPH Kids feature no advertising except for logos of collaborating charitable organisations. Furthermore the site hosts a blog which features post on children's fashion, guest entries and street style images.

### **Children's Wear Magazine**

German children's wear magazine Kid's Wear is a media partner of CPH Kids and promotes the fair together with other European children's wear fairs. The magazine encapsulates the visual and linguistic fashion vocabulary of adult fashion and transforms it into children's wear. For the A/W 2010 issue several influential photographers have contributed work on children in the form of editorials or portraits: Bruce Weber, Nan Goldin, Ryan McGinley. All three have been featured in fashion magazines and all three have in different ways flirted with sexual ambiguity and nudity in their work. Perhaps this is of no relevance, but none of them are exponents for the mainstream heteronormative depiction of sexuality, traditionally expressed in fashion representation (Guy Bourdin, Newton, Bailey). They have all at different times and in different ways challenged the tradition. Maybe this explains why kid's wear are working with them, and maybe this explains why they want to work with Kid's Wear. At the same time, and for the same reasons they do not constitute an obvious choice for a children's magazine in which sexual connotations would normally be considered inappropriate. Most likely, and in correspondence with the layout and tone of the magazine, the cooperation between these photographers and the magazine probably relies on two factors: The fashion and cultural edge and hype surrounding these photographers that rubs off on the magazine. Secondly, collaborating with these photographers expresses a professional and serious approach to fashion (It is perhaps worth noting that Goldin's pictures of her daughter naked has caused some commotion at exhibitions).

The approach to representing children in this way may stem from a cynical drive for novelty and exploration at the expense of children, but considering Goldin's photographs it seems likely that it expresses an absolute belief in the incorruptible nature of childhood. No matter how children are represented, their innocence or purity remains, and the ambiguity and controversial connotations are in the domain of the audience and not of the children.

One owner of a highly environmentally aware company even added that she is gradually opening up to the idea of children's fashion shows, something she considered unheard of only a few years back. Oddly enough, this attitude does not correspond with that of the organizers of the new fair; they express a clear opposition to the idea of fashion shows. Instead, they have introduced the fashion film as the format that communicates the trends and moods of the current fair and season. It does transpire in the interviews that this is not a set format, and if exhibitors are 'warming up' to the idea of shows, they are likely to be arranged. This example brings forward the way different attitudes are currently mixing in the field: Old conventions of values as a fixed compendium are challenged and fashion shows and sustainability go hand in hand.

Show video presented at the fair in February and on the website showcase brands that are represented at the fair. It shows a playful and straightforward approach to fashion. As in the magazine, the children are represented in a 'natural state'. They are playing and not presenting any outstanding abilities in any particular way (e.g. the ballet, juggling and break-dancing). Instead they are presented as normal kids that perform in front of a camera, and no measures are taken to camouflage the presence of the photographer, as the children often react to her or his presence.

## **Conclusion**

Our paper set out with a dual purpose, to contribute to theory fairs and festivals and to explore children's fashion. The emergence of two rival children's fashion fairs at the Copenhagen Fashion Week was put forth as a special case which challenges extant theory on field configuring events by interrogating the relationship between event and field. Do the two rival fairs together configure the field? Do they divide it? Do they present rival

vision and compete to shape the field? These questions raise important issues about how much we can read into what fair say about fields. We contend that fairs are a particular kind of medium and we need to pay attention to the different fair formats, the collection of events they are part of (e.g. Copenhagen Fashion Week and a network of international children's fairs) and the agency of event organizers in setting up fairs in ways that catalyze field development. Without careful consideration of the fair 'medium', its affordances and local significance (in regions as well as industries) and the role of event organizers, our understanding how such events encapsulate and shape change in the creative industries, we study, will be flawed.

Despite our critical observations, we fully subscribe to the view that fairs, festivals and similar events are unrivalled settings for exploring fields and the mechanisms that contribute to their change. While it is too soon to assess the extent and long-term impact of CPH Kids on the development Danish children's fashion, studying it and its rival CIFF Kids helped us take stock of the field, its key actors, relationships, divisions and identities. Following the tournament of value-approach, our analysis looked at the affirmations and negotiations values taking place at the venue(s). We sought to understand how values and discourse of childhood played themselves out in the context of venues, exhibited brands, events and media (discourses). While our analysis only offers only selected snapshots of the many activities taking place over the course of the two Fashion Weeks, we have followed the (sibling) fair rivalry participated, we have pointed to some of the ways in which positions are staked, values are addressed, forms of capital built and exchanged, and different field configuring mechanisms, contained within the fair, operate. While further research is required to gauge the field configuring impact of CPH Kids and explore more fully the values, identities and structures of Danish children's fashion, our investigation pointed to the field dividing impact that fair might have.

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