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Newsletter 3, December 2019

The Fabric of My Life (FABRIC) is a joint project of cultural institutions in DK, GR, and DE with the aim to innovate and test new methods in the cultural sectors concerning migration history, to empower refugee women and to train cultural workers and design students. FABRIC fosters new digital and cultural products co-created with migrants.

In FABRIC, we see clothing as an individual means of communicating our identity, our history and the future at which we aim.

Europeans and migrants (furthermost women) are invited to co-create and contribute to exhibitions, digital, pop-up, and conventional shows, and use clothing to narrate their life stories. FABRIC trains cultural workers to widen their scope, reach out to new audiences and speak directly to migrants.

Meetings

October 8, 2019

Monitoring Meeting at the Deutsches Textilmuseum Krefeld, connected to Cieta-conference. Participants: Marie-Louise Nosch, Annette Schieck, and Christina Schulte, new member of the Krefeld-team.

December 11, 2019

Zoom-meeting in cyberspace at 2 o'clock. Participants: Marie-Louise Nosch, Gitte Engholm, Stella Spantidaki, Annette Schieck and Christina Schulte.

Upcoming Monitoring Meeting

April 27 and 28, 2020

Monitoring Meeting at Artex Athens – to be organized.

Activities since July 2019

CTR Copenhagen and Danish partners

Gülzar Demir, student helper at CTR, is working with the new FABRIC-podcast platform (<https://staging-thefabricofmylife.herokuapp.com>) in cooperation with "Hack Your Future"-colleagues since July 2019.

Farzana Khosrawi, intern at CTR, is working on the FABRIC-Facebook-page, posting project-information, podcasts and news from our partners.

Rezvan Farsijani, artist associated to CTR, is working with Afghan, Iranian and African women and creates textile artwork inspired by traditional embroidery and ornaments to be incorporated into the *“Transparent Textile House”*. She keeps in touch with two Pakistani women living close to the Iranian border, wanting to pass through Iran, heading for Turkey and finally Europe.

Rezvan and Solveig travelled to Iran in end of October, 2019. Please find the report in **appendix 1**.



Solveig Søndergaard, designer associated to CTR, carries out an artistic project called *“Stitching Stories”* conducting ten immigrant and refugee females living in Denmark. Choosing a photo of personal relevance and memory of their former life the image is enlarged and printed on fabric. The women then start to work over the prints by adding embroidery with yarn and pearls. The project aims at expressing personal emotions related to the image, such as despair, joy, and happiness.

Faima has already finished her embroidery, see below. She has chosen her wedding picture at the age of 15. She felt very excited yet insecure because she had to move to a new family.





New FABRIC-Partners

Designskolen Kolding: Professor Thomas Binder (tb@dskd.dk) and research assistant Alexandra Lindek (al@dskd.dk).

New associated FABRIC-partners in Denmark: Anne Louise Bang (anlb@via.dk) and Else Skjold (eskj@kadm.dk) have changed positions on to VIA University College and the Royal Academy of Design and Architecture.

The two design schools have now become associated partners of FABRIC.

ARTEX Athen and Greek partners

Fall 2019: Textile Workshops in Athens

In Fall 2019, ARTEX resumed the creative weaving workshops at the Multifunctional Center for Refugees and Migrants in Athens with immigrant women from Cameroun and Congo.

The workshop involved weaving with small wooden frames (tabby, sumak, tapestry), as well as dyeing wool threads with natural dyes. Some women from the previous workshop wanted to continue to practice so they came again, but there were also new participants with no previous experience and the reaction of everybody was very enthusiastic.

For further information see: <https://www.accmr.gr/en/services/service/333-πολυδύναμο-κέντρο-προσφύγων.html>

DTM Krefeld and German Partners

New FABRIC-colleague: Christina Schulte has joined the project by the October 14, 2019, predeceasing Uta-Christiane Bergemann (contact: Christina.schulte@krefeld.de).

DTM-meetings with associated project-partners

July 9, 2019

Creative strategy-planning with professors of the *“Akademie Mode und Design (AMD)”* Düsseldorf.

Conceptual formulation:

“Marktforschung, Konzepte, Mode- und Grafikdesigns, redaktionelle Beiträge, Fotoarbeiten und Animationen zu dem Forschungsprojekt “Fabric of my Life” und der damit verbundenen Ausstellung im Deutschen Textilmuseum”.

- (1) Department of Brand and Communication Design (head: Ralf Lobeck).
The project has already started and is being described below.
- (2) Department of Brand and Communication Design (head: Ralf Lobeck).
Design and layout of the upcoming exhibition, focusing on public relations, media etc. in summer term 2020.
- (3) Department of Fashion Design (head: Markus Wirtz, responsible professor: Claus Bortas)
Creation and production (*“Formfindung”*) of dresses inspired by the *“Fabric of my Life”*, students of 2nd term, summer term 2020.

November 6, 2019

Meeting of Annette Schieck and Christina Schulte with Dr. Tagrid Yousef, Paul Brand, Sabine Oymanns of the *“Kommunales Integrationszentrum (KI) Krefeld”* setting up a new cooperation among partners of the Krefeld city council. Further meetings will be held in the beginning of 2020.



From the left: Felix Dobbert, Christina Schulte, Tagrid Yousef, Annette Schieck, Ralf Lobeck
© Photo: Nicolas Breuker.

Activities – DTM-AMD-KI-Cooperation

November 29, and December 13, 2019, photo sessions with 16 non-professional “models” were conducted. The non-professional models were dressed in their “Fabric of their lives” and met at the AMD Düsseldorf in a photo studio. Photographers were 21 students of Professor Ralf Lobeck and Felix Dobbert who – in the course of the project – were taught to take professional portraits-photos.

Most of the “models” were invited and coordinated by Dr. Tagrid Yousef and Paul Brand of the KI Krefeld, who are in close contact to various groups of migrants in Krefeld and the region. The “models” originate from Albany, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Ghana, Great Britain, Japan, Palestine, Peru, and Turkey, some of them being refugees.

The pictures taken will be a major element of the DTM-exhibition in 2021 and will also be employed for public relations purposes. Further images of the “making of” see **appendix 2**.



Photo session with Ingrid Villena Sandoval from Peru, wearing a dress of the Andes © Photo: Annette Schieck.

Publications

M.-L. Nosch, A new international project: The Fabric of My Life, ATR 61, 2019, 24–25. (Appendix 3)

Bilag / appendix:

Report: Rezvan_Solveig_copenhagen university.pdf; Documentation: DTM-AMD-KI photo session November 29 / December 13, 2019.pdf; Article: M.-L. Nosch, A new international project: The Fabric of my Life, ATR 61, 2019, 24–25.pdf

Yazd

We traveled to Yazd one of the oldest city in iran and traditional is one of the most important textile destinations. Most of the artisan are old and the yang don't like to work hard during the days for a handmade textile, it's economically really difficult for them. Yazd is specializes in a weaving technique called Daraie; Here, silk or cotton thread is dyed with natural colors and then woven in a characteristic diamond-shaped pattern.

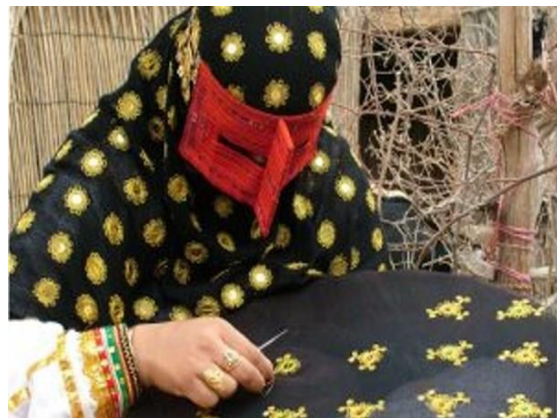


Next destination is:

Qeshm,

Qeshm is the largest island of Iran, located near the Persian Gulf. It is famous for its welcoming people and rich culture. Local costumes of this island express their historical culture that is associated with their typical geographic conditions and their religious beliefs.

The women of Qeshm Island are known throughout Iran for their expertise in *golabtoun douzi*, the sewing of colourful designs onto fabric, sometimes as embroidery and sometimes as an appliqué of sequins and/or hand-woven piping. These designs often incorporate images of flowers or local marine life such as turtles and starfish. Traditionally, women have worked on *golabtoun douzi* at home and rarely left their houses, leading to their social isolation and total economic dependence on men.



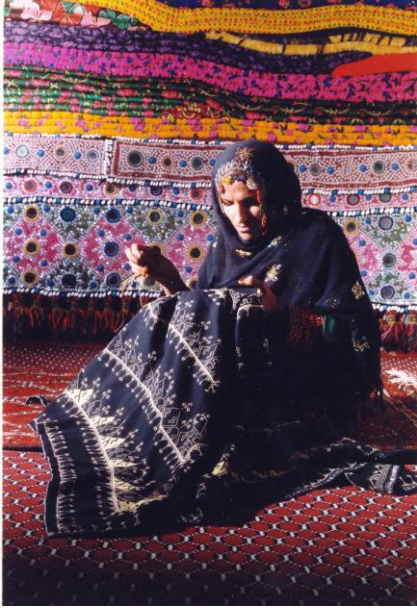
Baluchestan

is the second largest province of the 31 provinces of Iran. It is in the southeast of the country, bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan and its capital is Zahedan. embroideries are the most exquisite samples of handicrafts in Iran. These needleworks are locally called "Suchan Duzi". Baluchestan embroideries are the most exquisite samples of handicrafts in Iran. These needleworks are locally called "Suchan Duzi".

The needlework covers all over the fabrics, and is used to decorate handcuffs, trousers and are applied in forms like strips in the handcuffs, a piece on the back and the top of the Chadors. Very bright colors are incorporated into pieces amongst which orange and red are dominant. The details are done in green, blue, white and black. There is a common characteristic between all of the embroideries of these regions and that is using of geometric and linear motifs. Cursive and circular motifs are rarely stitched in Baluch needle works.

The motifs can be divided into three general groups: 1. Geometric, that are the most popular motifs of Baluch works. Triangles, squares and diamonds are main patterns and can be found in other handicrafts such as pottery, too. 2. Natural motifs, which include herbal and animal motifs such as "Gol-e Sohr" or red flower, "Gol-e Chahar Bargi" or four petal flower, "Katarog" or dandelion, "Gol-e Hasht Bargi" or eight petal flower, chicken, "Morg Punch" or feet of the chicken, "Hoshter Domb" or tail of the camel, "Katarpadak" or feet of the insects and wings of the dove. 3. Natural elements, like mountains, rivers and etc. The motif of "Chapras" is the most famous motif of this group, and is a simple representation of waves and motion. In addition to clothing, Baluch embroidery is applied to make covers of holy Quran, Kohl holders, bags and cushions.





Refugee Afghan in Iran

embroidery is used to decorate a wide range of objects, including household items (such as covers, curtains, cushions, table cloths, mats, towels and prayer mats), animal trappings (notably the decorative blankets for horses), as well as for the clothing of men, women and children. In general, women's clothing tends to be the most elaborately and colourfully embroidered, but some of the most famous embroidery comes from Kandahar and is found on men's garments, but the colours used are subdued.

One of the most widespread uses of embroidery is for the small caps worn by men, women and children. Each group has its own style of cap and form of decoration, with many variations in designs and colours related to ethnic group, villages, gender, etc.





Impressions of the DTM-AMD-KI Cooperation – Photo shooting of Migrants in their Ethnic Dress

December 2019 at AMD-Düsseldorf









Marie-Louise Nosch

A new international project: The Fabric of My Life



The Fabric of My Life (known as FABRIC), is a collaborative project between cultural institutions in Denmark, Greece and Denmark with the aims of innovating and testing new methods for exploring migration history in the cultural sector, empowering refugee women, and training cultural workers and design students. It was enabled by support from the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union, and will run from 2018 to 2022.

FABRIC fosters new digital and cultural productions co-created with refugee women. Clothing is an immediate, tactile, tangible and visual means of communication among Europeans and with the new citizens. Yet female clothing has become a contested field in this context. Scholars have used various paths to explore “modest fashion” and how it is practiced in new localities when forging new lives (Klepp and Bjerck 2014; Klepp, Vramo and Laitala 2014).

In FABRIC, clothing is acknowledged as an individual means of communicating identity, history and a better future. European and refugee women are invited to co-create and contribute to exhibitions in digital, pop-up, and conventional formats, and use clothing to narrate their life stories: Who taught me to knit? What did my grandparents wear? Who made my wedding gown? What is appropriate dress for me? The FABRIC team also co-creates podcasts of these narratives in several languages. There are plans for exhibitions of clothing and digital recreations of wardrobes lost during conflict. These cultural products are powerful dialogues reflecting and restoring memories of lost histories, both within Europe and beyond. They give a voice to a wide public in Europe and they offer culture, reflection and entertainment in various European languages, as well as in the languages of

the new European citizens: Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, Tigrinya and more. FABRIC wishes to promote the view that refugees not only need food, clothing and shelter but also access to art, media and culture.

Flight and immigration are not new phenomena but age-old formative experiences in Europe. FABRIC therefore links to other historical movements of people in the 20th century in Europe through memories and cultural heritage in oral narratives of female migrants. Forced migration often requires a departure with only clothes and some jewellery and other valuables in a suitcase. The latter are usually lost or sold in transit, leaving just the clothes as objects of memory. Greek families possess clothing that was brought from Asia Minor in 1922; German families have clothing from their flight after World War II and from each side of the Iron Curtain. Likewise, today's refugees from north Africa and the Middle East travel with modern clothing items. And, in their new lives, these clothing items gain new value as tokens of memory embedded with new meaning symbolising personal histories. Anthropologist Mark Vacher has suggested that these objects from the home culture are endowed with “dispositional longing” (2007). They contain special meaning, are carefully preserved, and not likely to be donated to a museum or discarded. FABRIC will use voice recordings and photographic documentation to include these objects in sensitive public storytelling with descriptions and narratives of their meaning by their owners. The narratives are recorded in the speakers' mother tongues. Fashion and clothing scholars have previously demonstrated how wardrobe biographies of refugee and migrant women can become a key to understanding journeys of immigration in which dress objects connect past,

present and future, and express memories, dreams and aspirations for individual people (Bang 2013).

Since the European refugee crisis began in 2015, artists have used refugees' clothing as a way of starting debates and reflections in galleries and art museums. Chinese artist Ai Weiwei curated the art project Laundromat as well as an installation of clothes left behind by Syrian refugees in a camp in northern Greece in a New York gallery. The National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens featured a special exhibition FACE Forward... into my home. Portraits and Stories of Refugees from November 2017 to January 2018, co-funded by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports, the United Nations Refugee Agency and the European Union's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid.

At the ICOM Costume Committee Annual Meeting 2017, Greek social anthropologist Elia Petridou discussed the public display of a woman refugee's black dress collected on the shore of Lesbos in Athens. The dress was displayed in the Museum of the History of Greek Costume in Athens with garments from the 1922 refugee crisis. This comparative display demonstrates the combination of two bodies of evidence for refugees' experiences, which FABRIC very much want to emulate. Petridou raised crucial questions about the intimate embodied experience of displacement, the biopolitics of provision of humanitarian aid, environmental issues, and the politics of representing "refugeeness" in museum displays and exhibitions.

FABRIC partners include cultural institutions in three European countries: in Denmark, the Centre for Textile Research, the Design School Kolding and the National Museum of Denmark; in Germany, Deutsches Textilmuseum, Krefeld and the Akademie für Mode und Design, Düsseldorf; in Greece, ARTEX. Most of the partners have previously been involved in initiatives at the crossroads between migration, integration, gender and dress. In the THREAD project (2017-2019), Danish private and public partners used textile craft and culture as a catalyst for encounters between refugee women, local craft organisations, and potential employers (Malcolm-Davies & Nosch 2018). In FABRIC, textile art and textile artists are given space and opportunities to visualise the bonds between women, migration and textile cultural heritage. Two talented female textile artists, Solvejg Berg Søndergård from Denmark and Rezvan Farsijani from Iran/France, work with refugee women as collaborators

in art workshops. This co-creation is accompanied by artist's talks, open virtual/digital workshops and pop-up exhibitions.

FABRIC is still collecting voice recordings of personal clothing stories and all contributions are welcome. The podcast platform is constructed by the social enterprise and coding school Hack Your Future (HYF), whose volunteers train refugees in digital media and programming skills. The FABRIC podcast platform has become a training project for the portfolios of refugees attending HYF's courses. If you are interested in sending us a podcast about the fabric of your life, or if you wish to volunteer as a podcast interviewer, please contact us: ctr@hum.ku.dk

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