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# XI Nordic-TAG, Session on Textile and Theory

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During the 11<sup>th</sup> Nordic TAG in Kalmar, Sweden 26-29 April Eva Andersson Strand, Ulla Mannering and Marie-Louise Nosch from the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Textile Research (CTR) organized a session on "Textile and Theory". The aim of the session was to demonstrate how theoretical approaches are applied to textile research and how textile researchers contribute to the theoretical discussion in various disciplines.

Eva Andersson Strand opened the session with an introductory paper giving several examples of how theory recently has been applied to textile research in general and especially how this aspect has influenced the research conducted at the CTR.

Johan Zimsen Kristiansen, an art historian who was a guest researcher at CTR in 2010, gave a very informative and inspiring paper on textiles and endangered languages, explaining the use of socio linguistic theory. Johan Zimsen Kristiansen then reported on a recent field trip among Navajo weavers and shepherders in the western part of the United States, where he has studied these endangered languages.

With her paper on "Textiles and animal skins; comparing materials in context", Susanna Harris from UCL, London discussed in depth the concept of Cloth Cultures which she is currently developing. Susanna Harris's starting point was that one of the reasons why textile research has a problem engaging with social theory is its focus on a single technology. Textile research privileges woven textiles: a technique of producing cloth on a loom from two intersecting thread systems. This approach allows excellent analysis of textile types and their mode of production, but does not readily incorporate

comparative materials. Instead by comparing the range of cloth-type materials including woven textiles, looping, netting, leather and fur as well as sheet metals and bark, cloth can be viewed in terms of values and social distinction both through time and across space.

Linda Hurcombe from the University of Exeter ended the session with the paper on "Intimate relations: the raw materials of clothing as landscape and event memories and sensory cues". Linda Hurcombe proposed that in the earlier prehistoric period there would be strong personal connections between collecting the resources and then making and wearing clothes. Clothing is intriguing from a theoretical perspective because it offers the chance to wear something for which there can be intimate memories of specific elements of the landscape of plants and animals. Furthermore the choice of how to process a skin, or the preparation of fibres alters textures, colours and smells. Thinking through the connections with the trees, plants and animals, and whether these are likely to be wild, tended, or domesticated resources, offers insights into attitudes to landscapes and to the sensory material cultures of the past. Linda Hurcombe demonstrated how different theoretically aware perspectives offer new ways of thinking about textiles.

As understood from the comments and questions following the papers, this session was an eye opener to many of the participants and hopefully the potent research field of textile and theory will be further discussed and challenged in the future. The papers will be published in the next ATN.