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## textilnet.dk – A Toolkit for Terminology Research and Presentation


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*Terminus plus 2003*

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# textilnet.dk – A Toolkit for Terminology Research and Presentation

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## textilnet.dk – A Toolkit for Terminology Research and Presentation

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Since February 2015, the digital dictionary or term database, [textilnet.dk](http://textilnet.dk), has been accessible on the Internet.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is to present the background and methods of this pilot project. Since 2010, the project has collaborated with The Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Textile Research (CTR), University of Copenhagen, and has gained moral support from Sabine Kirchmeier-Andersen, director of *Dansk Sprogævn*, the Danish National Language Advisory Committee.<sup>2</sup> From 2011 to 2015, we have been working with generous funding from the Danish Ministry of Culture. The objective of [textilnet.dk](http://textilnet.dk) is to preserve and communicate the cultural heritage of words and expressions for clothing and textiles in the Danish language. The unique starting points of the project include the collections of handwritten and typewritten files of terms compiled by the Danish textile researchers Erna Lorenzen and Ellen Andersen, quotations from all types of literature from

textile conservator Else Østergård, and photographic slides of 1980s textile samples by textile scholar and ethnologist Ingeborg Cock-Clausen, which provide great illustrative assistance.

### The files of Erna Lorenzen and Ellen Andersen

Dr Erna Lorenzen (1909-2006)<sup>3</sup> was the keeper and curator of the collection of historical dress and textiles in *Den Gamle By* (The Old Town), Danish Open Air Museum of Urban History and Culture<sup>4</sup> from 1959 to 1979. After she passed away in 2006, her files, which were probably collected while she was researching for her doctoral thesis, *Folks Tøj i og omkring Aarhus ca. 1675 - ca. 1850*,<sup>5</sup> were found and brought to *Den Gamle By*. These files have proved to be a true treasure chest for anyone interested in the terminology of different fabrics and textile fibres. Around 900 index cards with words have been thoroughly researched and digitized for [textilnet.dk](http://textilnet.dk).<sup>6</sup>

1. This resource of Danish textile and clothing terminology is available from the address: [www.textilnet.dk](http://www.textilnet.dk)

2. Dansk Sprogævn: <http://www.dsn.dk/> (Accessed December 3, 2014).

3. Erna Lorenzen: <http://www.kvinfol.dk/side/597/bio/1908/> (Accessed December 2, 2014).

4. [www.dengamleby.dk](http://www.dengamleby.dk)

5. Lorenzen, E. (1975) *Folks Tøj i og omkring Aarhus ca. 1675 - ca. 1850*. Aarhus. In English: *Clothes in the Aarhus Area 1675-1850*, it was published with an English summary.

6. The resources used researching the index cards in Erna Lorenzen's files will be placed at the end of this chapter as Appendix 1.



**Fig. 1.** From 2011 to 2014, Birka Ringbøl Bitsch was employed on the *textilnet.dk*-project, starting most of her research with this wooden box containing Erna Lorenzen's collection of terms. Photo: Tove Engelhardt Mathiassen.

From 1936 to 1966, Ellen Andersen (1898-1989)<sup>7</sup> was the keeper and curator at the National Museum of Denmark,<sup>8</sup> and, like Erna Lorenzen, had special responsibility for historical dress and textiles. Ellen Andersen's files are kept in the National Museum of Denmark, and her collection is larger (approximately 5,000 index cards) and more diverse than Erna Lorenzen's. Apart from terms for dress and textiles, Ellen Andersen's files contain many index cards with references to literature and other sources, which describe items kept in the National Museum. The index cards, which are not strictly about the definition of concepts, are keyed into Word documents as part of



**Fig. 2.** Dr. Erna Lorenzen. Photo: Karin Munk.

the *textilnet.dk* project but are not currently released in the online version of the database. There is, however, great potential which will hopefully be made available later. The majority of terms for fibres and fabrics in Ellen Andersen's collections are identical with Lorenzen's but Andersen's also focuses on terms for dress and parts of clothing. These number about 150 index cards, which are typed into Word files and made available as quotations in *textilnet.dk*.

### The history of the ideas behind *textilnet.dk*

In 2004, the project was started by the Danish Costume Group, *Dragtpuljen*,<sup>9</sup> which is a network of researchers into textiles and dress. The core members of the network come from the staff of Danish museums

7. Ellen Dorothea Johanna Andersen: <http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/597/bio/336/origin/170/> (Accessed December 2, 2014).

8. <http://natmus.dk/nationalmuseet/> (Accessed December 3, 2014).

9. Dragtpuljen runs a website: [www.dragt.dk](http://www.dragt.dk). The network was founded in 1985.





**Fig. 3.** Ellen Andersen. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark.

working with collections of dress and textiles, broadly speaking, as keepers, curators, conservators and also keen individuals who, without any formal academic training, have taken special responsibility for collections in smaller museums.<sup>10</sup> The work in *Dragtpuljen* is organized into small groups, each with special interests, and projects that unite the members. The group defining the project, which later became *textilnet.dk*, quickly – and boldly – agreed in 2004 that the future user groups of *textilnet.dk* would be the curators and registrars of museums and researchers who, for various reasons, need more knowledge of textile and clothing concepts/terms, as well as linguists and the general public. Languages change in daily life. Politics and culture change through time. By preserving words in a database, we keep in touch with our own history, craft and art. For instance, we can read the fairytales of H. C. Andersen and all other written sources with terminology about

clothing and fabrics with an improved understanding. Danish serves a small language area but this project is nevertheless founded on the conviction that it is of the greatest importance to preserve terms – particularly those that are no longer in use. The group's work started many discussions about classification. We agreed on four main categories of concepts:

1. Textiles and the different techniques to produce them.
2. Dress and all of their different parts.
3. Decorations and the techniques to produce decoration.
4. Colours, dyes and techniques to produce colour and dye.

Expressions and quotations from Danish literature with connotations of dress and textiles are noted in the database when they prove enlightening. The collection of quotations from 18<sup>th</sup>-century newspapers and 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature by Østergård is a unique resource in this context. These quotations are very helpful in understanding the use of certain textiles and clothing in their specific social environment.<sup>11</sup>

The fifth section is related to terms and expressions of fashions and styles. None of the collections of terms, which are included in *textilnet.dk* at this stage, contain examples of fashion/style which, for instance, would be termed *punk* and *hip hop*. It is hoped that these terms will be included later. At the moment, expressions and idioms with references to terms of dress and textiles are included when present in the sources used. Lorenzen's 900 index cards with terms primarily for fabrics and fibres were methodically researched in the handwritten files of the Danish lexicographer Mathias Moth from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These were also made available online during the work of *textilnet.dk*.<sup>12</sup> These terms for fabrics and textile fibres are also researched in a selection of scientific literature, dictionaries and other handbooks – up to 10 sources per concept are listed (*Appendix 1*).

10. From the late 1990s to 2013 the network received financial support from the Danish Ministry of Culture and opened up to members from universities and other research and educational institutions. List of members: <http://www.dragt.dk/medlemmer/> (Accessed December 3, 2014).

11. Else Østergård was appointed conservator at the National Museum of Denmark in 1958.

12. Moth's dictionary available due to another Danish digitalizing project: <https://dsl.dk/sprog/ordbog-og-sprogteknologi/moths-ordbog> (Accessed December 10, 2014).

### Termbase: Media Wiki

The group of scholars also undertook a review of database systems before choosing the Media Wiki system. We chose it for several reasons. First, the Wiki data structure format is familiar to everyone using the Internet. Secondly, the Media Wiki system is updated regularly. As mentioned above, the group has good support from the director of the *Dansk Sprogævn*, Sabine Kirchmeier-Andersen, who stresses the importance of regularly updating the systems. It would be inefficient in both research time and funding, if the group used a system, which, after a few years became obsolete. Thirdly, data can be exported into other systems from Media Wiki and be combined in new and informative ways. We also have contact with Professor Bolette Sandford Pedersen<sup>13</sup> at the University of Copenhagen, who in 2004-2008, worked with DanNet, a digital platform for presenting words, terminology and relations between words. In the future, *textilnet.dk* will be a source of concepts/terms for other databases and terminology projects, such as DanNet.

### The conceptual structure of *textilnet.dk*

Textile terminology work is based on an analysis and structuring of concepts and the relations between them.<sup>14</sup> The concept of textile/clothing is the basic element of our work in *textilnet.dk* and the way we order and transfer knowledge. When we think of textile concepts, such as a fibre, we choose a number of properties in order to characterize the concept. The fibre is a material and also used to form a textile structure, such as a basic weave. The properties of the objects are abstractions and characteristics, which form the concepts. In *textilnet.dk* we have concepts connected to single specific objects - individual concepts such as 'siamhamp' and 'bielefelderlærred' and more general concepts as fibre and weave. Characteristics such as form, function, and origin correspond to the properties of the objects, many of which are very

common and are not suitable for identifying a concept. The characteristics that we represent in *textilnet.dk* are the delimiting characteristics that differentiate one concept from others. Concepts are abstractions or mental units and we need definitions and terms to express them. The core of our work – the definitions – are the descriptions of the concept, while the terms are the expressions we use when we refer to the concepts. The terms consist of either verbal elements, such as words, or nonverbal elements such as symbols or drawings.

In order to take the very high number of term variants into account in *textilnet.dk*, each concept is represented by a definition, an explanation, an illustration whenever possible, references, and a link to other languages. Every concept is represented by the following data format: term, variant(s), languages, definition, explanation and bibliographic reference. If the user searches for information about the fibre 'abaca' from the category: material, the following variants appear: 'Abacca', 'abaka', 'banantrævler', 'manila', 'manilahamp', 'menadohamp' and 'siamhamp'.<sup>15</sup>

The term variants of 'abaca' are simple orthographic variants such as different spellings of the same term, as well as more specific knowledge about the concept, for example, the origins of the fibre abaca ('siamhamp') and the resemblance of the fibre ('banantrævler'). The characteristics of the concepts such as the form and the geographic origins are thus reflected by different verbal representations, and the knowledge about the generic aspects of the concept of plant fibre (hemp and banana) is transparent for any user of *textilnet.dk* in order to transmit the knowledge of the subject field, which one single standardized term might not give. To give another example: the numerous variants in the term base for the concept of the technique of the basic 'tabby weave' are provided this way: Term: 'lærred' (Tabby) Variants: lærret, læret, lærept, lerredt, læith, lærth, lerudth, lærft, En.: Linen. (Juil 1807, 'Lærred') Germ.: Leinvand. (Juil 1807, 'Lærred') Fr.: Toile. (Juil 1807, 'Lærred'), Definition: Textile .... Basic weave of tabby.<sup>16</sup>

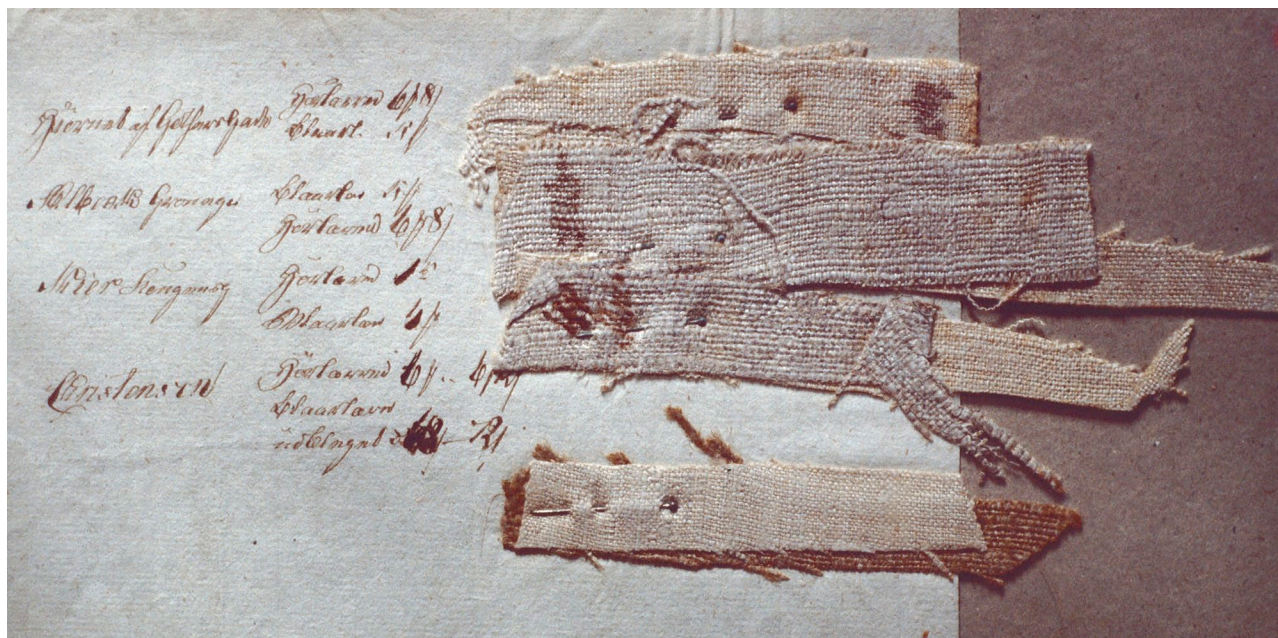
13. Bolette Sandford Pedersen: [http://research.ku.dk/search/?pure=en%2Fpersons%2Fbolette-sandford-pedersen\(d70a3b44-d3ab-4259-a0aa-17d84d3d7de5\).html](http://research.ku.dk/search/?pure=en%2Fpersons%2Fbolette-sandford-pedersen(d70a3b44-d3ab-4259-a0aa-17d84d3d7de5).html) (Accessed December 11, 2014).

14. Guide to terminology, NORDTERM 8 p. 9.

15. Abaca <http://www.textilnet.dk/index.php?title=abaca> (Accessed December 12, 2014).

16. *textilnet.dk* (Accessed December 12, 2014).





**Fig. 4.** Samples of tow and linen tabby woven 1816 in *Trinitatis Sogns Arbejdshus*, an institution established 1794 for poor women. The samples were sent to the Poor-Law authorities. Photo: Ingeborg Cock-Clausen.

Other term variants in the term base such as ‘lærred’ are ‘agenois-lærred’, ‘bengalsklærred’, ‘bielefelderlærred’, ‘bocklærred’ reflect the origins of the fabric, which is produced in Agenois, Bielefeld etc. In this way, we can keep track of different concepts of a weave and a final product of the basic tabby weave, different origins, orthographic variants, and the integration of French and German terms in our material. Researchers in both ancient and modern textile studies need to understand both generic and specific concepts and their relevant terminology in order to share understanding in a common language across times and cultures. Our goal is to share concepts, language and associated cultural ideas, and not to standardize the terms. Another very important concept from our chosen time period is silk, which is represented by the following variants: ‘Silke’, ‘silky’, ‘silchæ’, ‘silki’ and eight variants in *textilnet.dk* if you search the term: ‘floretsilke’, ‘floretsilke’, ‘fleuretsilke’, ‘flokssilke’, ‘flokssilke’, ‘flossilke’, ‘chappesilke’, ‘schappesilke’.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Examples from [textilnet.dk](http://www.textilnet.dk)*

Three concepts/terms are presented here to exemplify how *textilnet.dk* could be a toolkit for other terminology projects. Every concept in *textilnet.dk* will be worked up in the seven categories mentioned above, whenever possible from the current sources. The first category is variants, which are very important from linguistic and historical perspectives. The next is language, when it is relevant for understanding the concept, and when this information is available in our current sources (Appendix 1). The third and most important category is the definition, which expresses the condensed analysis of the concept. Language and terms change their meanings over time so whenever possible, the relevant date/time from the available sources is the next category. The sources in which the time aspect existed are also listed. The fifth category is explanation. This category is usually somewhat longer than the definition, the latter being the condensed result of our work. The next and very important point is the quotation, which is an excellent way to place terms

17. Floretsilke :[http://www.textilnet.dk\(index.php?title=Floretsilke\)](http://www.textilnet.dk(index.php?title=Floretsilke) (Accessed December 12, 2014).

for fabrics and clothing in their original social setting. Just one example of the quotations will be given here as most of the language is in very old-fashioned Danish, which is difficult to translate into English.<sup>18</sup> The last of the seven categories is the sources, and, as an extra service for the user groups of *textilnet.dk* up till 2017, we have also noted in which of our sources the concept/term is not mentioned.

The first example is the term *angoriske kamelotter*,<sup>19</sup> which is chosen to show the interrelations of the concept variants in *textilnet.dk*. The variants are *angorinsk kamelot* (singular) and *angoriske kamelotter* (plural). The variants illustrate the way *textilnet.dk* links the pages from every concept/term in the main section, where the terms are listed alphabetically. Alternatively, a user can make an open search of a term and will see every mention of it in the entire database. The category for language is empty in this example because it is only used when the relevant information is available in the current sources. This presents great opportunities for collaboration. A goal of the presentation of this toolkit is to inspire the use of the system for other digital dictionaries (for example, a *textilnet.nl*, a *textilnet.uk*, a *textilnet.it*) with all the possibilities of comparative research, which would be the outcome of interrelated databases of terms. The definition of *angoriske kamelotter* is: “Textiles woven of Angora goatshair (see mohair), are described as fine and light, can be moiré (see moiré). Produced in Turkey and especially used for women’s clothes.” This definition gives information about geography (Turkey), textile fibres (Angora goatshair) and fabrication techniques such as the weave (but not the exact method) and finishing, *i.e.* moiré, quality of the fabric (fine and light) and common use of the fabric (women’s clothing). The time category tells us that in addition to its inclusion in Lorenzen’s files, this term

was mentioned in two Danish encyclopedias for merchandise, namely Juul dated 1807 and Rawert dated 1831. The source category tells us that the term was neither mentioned in sources dated before 1807, nor in the sources dated after 1831, and not in any other contemporary sources.

Apart from the references to *mohair* and *moiré*, the category of explanation for *angoriske kamelotter* guides the user further by linking to the term *kamelot*.<sup>20</sup> This concept/term has nine variants: *kamelot*, *camelot*, *kamlot*, *kammelot*, *kamelet*, *kamelotz*, *samelot*, *shamlot* and unsurprisingly, *angoriske kamelotter*. The language category presents the English term *camblet* with reference to Rawert 1831 and the French term *camelot* and its Old French variants: *camel*, *chamel* and *kamel*. The definition says: “Textile, originally woven of camel yarn [this term is blue with underscore which in the Media Wiki system indicates that the user can link directly to *camel yarn*], spun from hair of the Angora goat (*cf.* mohair [blue with underscore]), eventually mixed with silk. Normally woven in a weave with two shafts (see [weaving techniques](#) [this term is red with an underscore showing the user that the term will be incorporated in *textilnet.dk* at a later stage]). Later also woven in different mixtures of camel yarn, cotton yarn, silk yarn and linen yarn. Mixed yarns are also found. From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it gradually became more common to use sheep’s wool instead of [camel yarn](#) [blue with underscore]. At first produced in Angora (Ankara, Turkey), and later in many places in Western Europe. *Cf.* [angoriske kamelotter](#) [blue with underscore].”

The definition for *kamelot* is much more comprehensive and precise than the definition for *angoriske kamelotter*, particularly concerning the fibres used for these fabrics. The user has the opportunity to read the explanation category to understand this complexity.

18. This quotation stems from the files collected by Else Østergård: “1795. Kappe. Onsdagen den 5 August, om Morgen Kl. 9, indsneg sig et Fruentimmer i Gaarden No 56 i Store Kongensgade, var høj og smækker, klæd i lys Kattunstrøje og Skiørt, et trykket Tørklæde om Halsen og en hvid Kappe paa Hovedet, med en liden rød Hue under; ved hendes Bortgang savnes ---- Adresseavisen, Tirsdagen den 11 August 1795.” This passage was printed in the Danish newspaper *Adresseavisen*, August 11, 1795 and it describes the looks and the clothing of a female thief: “1795. Cap. Wednesday August 5 at 9 o’clock in the morning a woman stole into the Yard of No 56 in Store Kongensgade [a street which still exists in Copenhagen], [she] was tall and slim, clad in a light Jacket and Skirt of Calico, a printed Scarf around her Neck and a white Cap on her Head, with a small red Cap underneath; at her Departure [the following] is missing.”

19. Angoriske kamelotter: [http://www.textilnet.dk/index.php?title=Angoriske\\_kamelotter](http://www.textilnet.dk/index.php?title=Angoriske_kamelotter) (Accessed December 12, 2014).

20. Kamelot: <http://www.textilnet.dk/index.php?title=Kamelot> (Accessed December 13, 2014).



The explanation refers to Juul 1807, Rawert 1831 and *Ordbog over det Danske Sprog* 1927. Juul explains that most of these fabrics were purple and of a much higher quality than fabrics produced in what he calls Europe *i.e.* Western Europe at the time. Only a small proportion was originally exported from Turkey. Then, he discusses the first places where these fabrics were copied – in specific towns in France, Belgium and the Netherlands – and how the camel yarn, cotton yarn and silk yarns were mixed for the *kamelots*. He also explains what kind of techniques were used to decorate the fabric after weaving and that producers in 1807 had to compete against English and German producers. In 1831, Rawert explains the use of sheep's wool, specifically good worsted, for the *kamelots*. The best of these were mixed with silk from Piedmont in Italy. Not until 1927 is the use of linen yarn mentioned. In this way, the *textilnet.dk* user is offered a clear understanding of how these fabrics and the term *kamelot* changed over time.

The second short example is the term *amabouck*.<sup>21</sup> The definition is: "Textile, linen [blue with underscore, which indicates that the user can get access to the complexity of the meanings of this concept as both weaving technique and fibres mentioned above]. Described as coarse and half bleached (see bleaching [red with underscore indicating that the term will be incorporated in *textilnet.dk* at a later stage]). Produced in England. Used for clothing and for sacks and wrapping." The explanation gives the user insight into how the same coarse fabric could be used as clothing and wrapping. Juul (1807) explains that *amabouck* was used for clothing slaves and sailors and for the other wrapping purposes. This example shows that textiles are highly illustrative of social history: the same coarse fabric was suitable for protective wrapping and clothing specific people. *Textilnet.dk* provides many such insights into social history.

### *Illustrations of the concepts in textilnet.dk*

Whenever possible relevant illustrations are included too. The non-verbal representation of concepts is an

important contribution to the database. Many elements of the concepts, such as the complexity of a weave, are easier to understand in illustrations than in words. Cock-Clausen's collection of slides from the 1980s are now in the library of the Design Museum Denmark. She photographed textile samples in Danish museums and archives and many of these photographs serve as excellent illustrations for *textilnet.dk*. The best slides show a textile sample with information about terms, dates and places of production. They give users a unique opportunity to understand the quality and social context of the term in question. Other types of illustrations (for example, diagrams and drawings) help the explanation of complex weaves such as satins. Different relationships between concepts can be represented by the illustrations in addition to the hyperlinks between the definition and other explanatory fields. The relations are either part of relations – if the concept is part of a whole as, for instance a heddle is a part of a loom, or generic relations as, for instance 'a type of' relation: twill is a 'type of' a basic weave as is satin and tabby. A *chaîne opératoire* is very important when textile techniques are illustrated, and we need to record and relate the concepts for preparing the loom such as warping, beaming, and heddling. These temporal relations or associative relations are also seen in the production of the yarns by combing, carding and twisting procedures, for instance. The designations and the terms are only verbal translations-transmissions of the meanings shortened forms of the definition, and a possible definition of a fibre might also be a chemical formula as shown in ISO standards, which could be included at a later stage of the project.

### Perspectives

With the release of *textilnet.dk*, we hope to have established a useful tool for many different user groups, and *textilnet.dk* could be a stepping-stone to a variety of international and multilingual projects which in tandem with *textilnet.dk* could communicate about the terminology of textiles from different time periods and be the foundation of comparative studies.

21. Amabouck: <http://www.textilnet.dk/index.php?title=Amabouck> (Accessed December 11, 2014).



**Fig. 5.** The group behind the *textilnet.dk*-project in 2013. From left: Else Østergård (conservator at The National Museum of Denmark), Kirsten Toftegaard (curator at Designmuseum Denmark), Birka Ringbøl Bitsch (employed in Den Gamle By at the *textilnet.dk*-project), Tove Engelhardt Mathiasen (curator at Den Gamle By and project leader of the *textilnet.dk* project), Maj Ringgaard (conservator at the National Museum of Denmark), Susanne Lervad (terminologist, visiting scholar, CTR), Anne Hedeager Krag (freelance researcher) and Inge-Margrethe Davidsen (retired registrar). Textile researcher Ingeborg Cock-Clausen was not present at the time.

The use of a Wiki model makes it possible to link to other projects in the field of terminology to transfer knowledge and definitions, for instance, by the means of open and linked data in the Semantic Web. Many other classified multilingual cultural heritage databases all over the world are linked together and are accessible in open data forms for very big research

and museum institutions, such as the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, are front-runners who have already presented multilingual thesauri – the Getty vocabularies.<sup>22</sup> As mentioned in this article, XML formats and wikis have been the guidelines for our terminology work of *textilnet.dk* in order to exchange data from other resources. The next phase of *textilnet*.

22. <http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies> (Accessed 1-12-2014). *What is cinnabar? What is a rhyton?* The Getty vocabularies contain structured terminology for art, architecture, decorative arts and other material culture, archival materials, visual surrogates, and bibliographic materials. Compliant with international standards, they provide authoritative information for catalogers and researchers, and can be used to enhance access to databases and Web sites. The Getty Vocabularies grow through contributions. The vocabulary data is available for licensing and accessible free of charge below for more limited online use.

dk will need to link data to concepts and have common dynamics tools jointly maintained by the communities of users and not static authorities. We hope to be able to link to multilingual thesauri of this kind in order to transmit knowledge about textile concepts for education and training in the future. Feedback on the current *textilnet.dk* is welcome at [textilnet.dk@dengamleby.dk](mailto:textilnet.dk@dengamleby.dk). This is only the first step – our goal is to provide a worldwide web of interlinked resources for textile terminologies.

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- Suonuuti, H. (1997) *Guide to Terminology*, NORDTERM 8, Tekniikan SANAstokeskus, Helsinki

### Appendix 1

#### *Resources used in researching the terms for *textilnet.dk**

- Andersen, Ellen: "Anna Sophies dragter". I *Dronning Anna Sophie. Festskrift til Lehnsherrn H. Berner Schilden Holsten i anledning af hans 70 års dag 18. juli 1951*. Kbh. 1951, s. 131-148, [Andersen 1951].
- Andersen, Ellen: *Danske bønderes klædedragt*. Kbh.: Carit Andersens Forlag, 1960, [Andersen 1960].
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