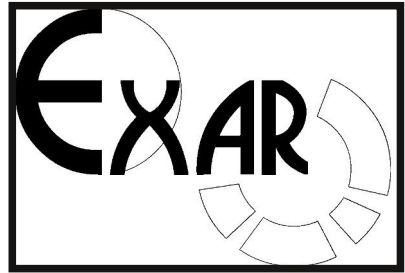


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There and back again...

World wide response to archaeological textile finds – case study Hallstatt

Karina Grömer

Zusammenfassung – Hin und wieder retour.... Weltweite Resonanz auf archäologische Textilfunde – Fallstudie Hallstatt. *Beim Themenbereich Forschung und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit dient gerade die Experimentelle Archäologie als wichtiges Bindeglied, weil durch sie bruchstückhafte Hinterlassenschaften unserer Vorfahren oder auch komplexe oder abstrakte Vorgänge gut greifbar werden. Die Experimentelle Archäologie hat sich nun auch durch die Aktivitäten von EXAR seit mehr als zwei Jahrzehnten zu einem wichtigen Teil interdisziplinärer Forschung entwickelt, sodass ihre Erkenntnisse ganz selbstverständlich in materialwissenschaftliche, aber auch theoretische Arbeiten im akademischen Bereich einfließen.*

Nun gilt es auch zu hinterfragen, wie und durch welche Kanäle sich diese wissenschaftlichen Ergebnisse der Experimentellen Archäologie abseits der akademischen Welt verbreiten – von wem, wie und auf welche Weise diese Erkenntnisse genützt und benützt werden. Im Bereich der Textiltechniken ist ein sehr großes Interesse verschiedenster Nutzergruppen festzustellen – dies sowohl im „direkten Kontakt“ in Ausstellungen, als auch mittels Publikationen sowie im Internet.

Im folgenden Beitrag werden die eisenzeitlichen Textilien aus Hallstatt als Fallstudie herangezogen, um die Verwendung der wissenschaftlich und experimentell erzielten Forschungsergebnisse zu untersuchen. Ein interessantes Phänomen ist, dass die Textilien aus Hallstatt, vor allem die karierten Stoffe und die Brettchenwebereien, neben Reenactmentgruppen, Do-it-Yourself- und Handwerksbegeisterten, durchaus auch für moderne Künstler und kommerziell Modeschaffende als Inspirationsquelle dienen. Das World Wide Web spielt hierbei als Verbreitungsmechanismus eine sehr wichtige Rolle.

Schlagworte: Archäologische Textilfunde, Hallstatt, Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Internet, Reenactmentgruppen, Do-it-Yourself, Textilfirmen, Künstler

Keywords: Archaeological textile finds, Hallstatt, dissemination, World Wide Web, reenactment, Do-it-Yourself, textile companies, artists

Introduction

Experimental Archaeology serves as an important link between scientific research and its dissemination. By the help of ex-

periments, fragmented objects as well as complex or abstract craft techniques can be made visible and accessible to the common public. Experimental Archeology has developed into an important aspect of

interdisciplinary research during the last decades, also through the activities of EXAR, so that its results are incorporated into material culture studies as well as theoretical work in the academic. It is important to investigate how, and through which channels, the scientific results of experimental archaeology are spread out within the academic world; by whom, how, and in what way these results are used. Significant interest in prehistoric and historic textile crafts is shown by various user groups as a result of direct contact with exhibitions, but also through books and via the World Wide Web. The following article investigates the reception of archaeological textile finds in non-academic discourse. What happens to textile research and academic experiments after they have been presented at conferences, in academic papers and popular publications? How do people react to them? Who uses that information and why? Here, the Iron Age textiles from the salt-mine Hallstatt in Upper Austria are in focus as a case study to explore these questions.

Hallstatt textiles and non-academic interest groups

Prehistoric textiles have been found in the Hallstatt salt-mine for more than 150 years and excavations by the Natural History Museum Vienna (H. Reschreiter) are still ongoing. Their scientific publication (for research history see GRÖMER ET AL. 2013, 33-52), various public lectures, their display in the Natural History Museum Vienna and Museum Hallstatt, as well as news media have enabled both scientists and the public to gain knowledge about them. Fabrics with coloured patterns such as checks and tablet woven bands are of particular interest outside the scientific community. The reason may be that they are colourful and show "celtic" patterns such as checks ("tartans"). Furthermore, the tablet woven items have distinctive

and complicated designs such as lozenges, meanders and swastikas. This rare view into the textile world 2500 years ago makes them very interesting to a wide public. Beside being reproduced by re-enactment groups, Do-it-Yourself and handicraft enthusiasts, the textiles from Hallstatt also serve as a source of inspiration for modern artists, designers and commercial textile companies. In all these cases, the World Wide Web plays a very important role as circulation mechanism (about archaeological research and Internet see e.g. KIRCHER 2012, 211-238). The ways in which each of these interest groups engage with the textiles is discussed below.

Re-enactment and Living History

Historical re-enactment (see also DECKER 2010; GAPPS 2009; Wiki_Reenactment_2016) is an educational or entertainment activity in which people follow a plan to recreate aspects of a historical event or period. In England and the USA, re-enactment also comprises performances of historic battles. Most participants are amateurs who pursue history as a hobby, but also historians and archaeologists share that interest. Re-enactors are commonly divided (or self-divide) into several broadly defined categories, based on the level of concern for authenticity. The term Living History in some ways overlaps with re-enactment: it describes the performance of bringing history to life for the general public in a manner that in most cases does not follow a planned script. Historical presentation includes a continuum from well-researched attempts to recreate a known historical event for educational purposes, through representations with theatrical elements, to competitive events for purposes of entertainment. Living histories are usually meant for education of the public, often in museums (CARSTENS, MEINERS, MOHRMANN 2008) such as in



Fig. 1: Recreation of Early Iron Age male garments, based on Hallstatt textiles and belt from Vače; at Natural History Museum Vienna. – Rekonstruktion eines eisenzeitlichen Männergewandes anhand von Funden aus Hallstatt und Vače, im Naturhistorischen Museum Wien.

open-air museums like Roskilde and Lejre in Denmark (Sagnlandet_DK_2016), and at particular events like “Celtic Night” at the Open Air Museum Asparn/Zaya in Austria (Asparn_2016).

Archaeological textiles are of special importance for re-enactment and Living History relating to the “Celts” or “Viking Age” for which some participants attach special attention to the authenticity of design and construction of clothing and weapons. The items offer the wearer a life-like experience in the use of materials, manufacturing techniques (e.g. spinning, different weaving techniques) and tailoring that are as close to original finds as possible. Event spectators may derive more satisfaction from attending re-enactments when a high level of authenticity is attained in both the wearing and use of individual clothing and equipment. In order to

obtain a high level of authenticity, reference to particular archaeological finds is of importance (Fig. 1). For “Celtic” re-enactment the Hallstatt textiles are often used, especially the tablet woven borders. This knowledge about the archaeological finds is gained through visiting museums, public presentations, but also publications and the internet (see below).

DIY and people interested in handcraft

Do-it-Yourself (DIY) is a term used for people creating things for themselves without the aid of paid professionals. Academic research describes DIY as behaviours where, *“individuals engage raw and semi-raw materials and component parts to produce, transform, or reconstruct material possessions, including those drawn from the natural environ-*

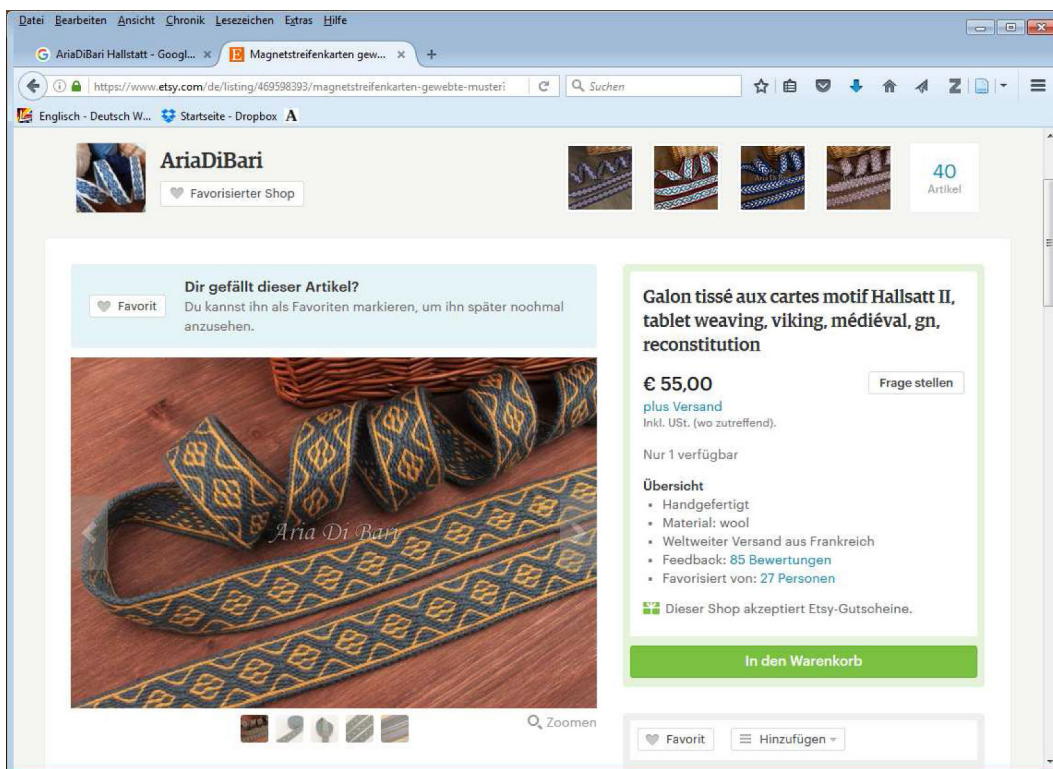


Fig. 2: Website of AriaDiBari with merchandise of Hallstatt tablet borders. – Homepage von AriaDiBari mit angebotener Meterware zu Brettchenwebereien aus Hallstatt.

ment" (WOLF, McQUITTY 2011). The motivations behind DIY are multi-faceted, such as the lack of product availability, lack of product quality, the enhancement of identity, the celebration of creativity and craftsmanship, community seeking, and the uniqueness of the products obtained. With regard to archaeological textiles, DIY and handcraft enthusiasm meet historical interest. Sometimes the aesthetic values of a certain object is in focus, but very often the reference to something "authentic" and "traditional" is the reason to choose a specific archaeological textile find for recreation (see e.g. Sangre_Aguierre_2016). The Internet has enabled DIY and handcraft people to get access to scientific research to a hitherto unknown extent, to recreate, be inspired and to share their products to the world. In addition to social networks like facebook and twitter, there

are specific websites like pinterest or tumblr, which serve the need to share such experiences (see below).

Merchandise

As noted above, among others, there are specific groups of people who are interested in authentic historical textiles, such as re-enactment groups, DIY and people generally interested in textile handcraft. Sometimes these interest groups overlap with people who have a commercial interest in historical textiles, such as people producing hand-woven bands to sell at craft fairs. Tablet woven bands as 1:1 replica or bands inspired by the Hallstatt pattern, creatively altered in colour and material are sometimes sold at events like "celtic markets" or "Medieval fairs". Often both the producers as well as the consu-

mers know of the authenticity of the patterns. The producers sometimes belong to the group of re-enactment people or other persons interested in handcraft, producing for that specific market of “Histo-tainment”.

A French hand weaver with the pseudonym AriaDiBari from Draguignan in France, sells tablet woven bands via the internet platform Etsy. Her background is re-enactment or Living History as can be deduced from various posts. She also sells her products at events like re-enactment festivals. For her merchandise, she uses archaeological and historic patterns as well as folklore and fantasy ones. Her customers use the bands for various costumes, in her advertisement (*Abb. 2*) she speaks about Iron Age, Vikings and Medieval Period and also specifically mentions the case of reconstructions of a tablet woven band from Hallstatt (AriaDiBari_2016).

Artists

Contemporary artists have a range of motivations in working with historical textiles, especially with the Hallstatt textiles. However, a common focus is on specific techniques or patterns. For example, the textile and fashion designer Marie Therese Wisniowski from Australia uses information about the Hallstatt textiles as source of inspiration for her own art (Art_Quill_2016). She discusses chequered designs of Hallstatt textiles, as sources she refers to publications.

Another motivation for artists is direct collaboration with the archaeologists and analysts working with the original finds. In 2012 at the Natural History Museum Vienna, an exhibition was opened which resulted from a research project about dye-stuffs in Hallstatt Textiles (HallTexFWF) (HOFMANN-DE KEIJZER, KERN, PUTZ-PLECKO 2012). Next to analytical work on dye-stuffs and textile technology, and experi-



Fig. 3: Works of the artist Anna Moser, inspired by finds from Hallstatt (tablet woven band HallTex 123 and jewellery from the cemetery). Exhibition “Colours of Hallstatt” at Natural History Museum Vienna 2012-2013. – Arbeiten der Künstlerin Anna Moser, inspiriert von Funden aus Hallstatt (Brettchengewebe HallTex 123 und Schmuck aus dem Gräberfeld).

mental work on dyeing and weaving techniques, it was also the aim of the project to get into contact with contemporary artists in order to inspire them to create modern objects based on the knowledge gained from research and experiments on archaeological objects. The textile design artist Anna Moser was fascinated by tablet woven bands from Hallstatt and used both the technique, as well as the patterns from the salt mine, to create contemporary clothing and jewellery woven with wire (MOSER 2012, fig. p. 25) (*Fig. 3*).

Textile/cloth companies

Commercial textile companies are interested in historical textiles. There are two companies located in Austria who refer to the Iron Age fabrics from the salt mine Hallstatt for modern fashion design. Both companies deal with traditional forms of alpine clothing (*Dirndl, Lederhose, Landhausstil*), also reflected through their company philosophy. In their wish to position themselves within the world-wide



Fig. 4: Iron Age textile HallTex 74 with “tartan design” from the salt-mine Hallstatt. – Kariertes eisenzeitliches Gewebe HallTex 74 aus dem Salzbergwerk Hallstatt.

market as “traditional Austrian” the Hallstatt textiles serve a specific function. By referring to, “thousand years old fabrics, found on an archaeological dig” in Austria, they trace back the origins of specific highly valued handcraft – values that make them interesting to their customers.

Around the year 2000, Fa. Rettl, a textile company located in Klagenfurt, Carinthia, created a “Celtic Spirit tartan” (Rettl_Celtic_Spirit_2016) based on a chequered cloth from Hallstatt. The textile in question, HallTex 74 (GRÖMER ET AL. 2013, 398), an olive-green twill decorated with dark brown “tartan” pattern, was on display at the Natural History Museum Vienna at the time (Fig. 4). Fa. Rettl recreated the archaeological find thread by thread and used that fabric for different products such as skirts, ladies jackets and men’s ties (Rettl_Magazin_5/2015) (Fig. 5). Their most important garment design with that fabric was a “Scottish Kilt” – referring to the “celtic” age of the archaeological find. As an advertising gimmick the “Celtic Spirit tartan-kilts” were sometimes given to celebrities including the actor Sir Sean Connery, who didn’t like the idea that the Austrian tartans were older than the Scottish ones (Karo_Kilt_2016)! Some years later, in 2011, the textile appeared on Scotsweb as “Hallstatt tartan” with the



Fig. 5: Cover Magazin Rettl&Friends 5 Herbst/Winter 2013/14: Jackets and kilts, Celtic Spirit Design. – Jacken und Kilt im Celtic Spirit Design.

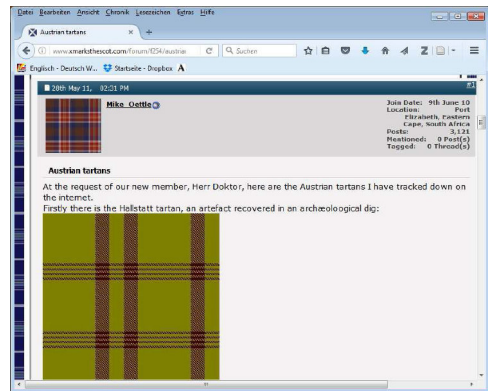


Fig. 5a: “Austrian tartan” on Scotsweb. – „Austrian tartan“ auf Scotsweb.

line, “an artefact recovered in an archaeological dig” (Austrian_Tartan_2016) (Fig. 5a).

In 2015 the Natural History Museum Vienna cooperated with the textile company Gössl based in Salzburg (Gössl_2016). Fashion designers visited the museum for inspiration for the autumn/winter 2016/2017 design collection. Not only did they



Fig. 6: Fashion design autumn/winter 2016, Fa. Gösssl, inspired by Hallstatt textiles. – Modelinie Herbst/Winter 2016 der Fa. Gösssl, inspiriert durch Stoffe aus Hallstatt, Fotoshooting im Naturhistorischen Museum.

study the textiles on display in the exhibition but also those stored in the archives and met the archaeologists and textile researcher.

The result is a “Hallstatt spirit” collection, using cloth types, pattern types and weaving techniques found at the salt-mine Hallstatt (HOFFMANN 2016; also Goessl_Journal 2016). They were used for a modern “Country House style” (“*Landhaus-Stil*”) dresses, women’s and men’s jackets and blouses. The photo shoot for their advertisements was also done in the exhibition rooms at the museum (Fig. 6) thereby creating a reference to the archaeological record.

Hallstatt textiles and the World Wide Web

Among Iron Age textiles (in the web usually referred to as “celtic” textiles despite the fact that there are no celts in the Early Iron Age Hallstatt) those deriving from the princely tomb Eberdingen-Hochdorf and the salt-mine Hallstatt are the

most favourite in the World Wide Web. The most important channels through which information about archaeological textiles and experiments are spread are academic channels like institutional websites, sites for open access publication (academia.edu and researchgate.net), but also picture sharing websites, private homepages and internet forums.

Academic channels

Websites of museums and research institutions often give some basic information about their research (e.g. textile research on Homepage_NHM_2016). Due to the structure of such websites, the information is very short, but usually accompanied by further references, especially a publication list of members of the institution. Sometimes, museums also have blogs for direct information about ongoing research (e.g. Hallstattblog_2016; see LÖW, POPPENWIMMER, RESCHREITER 2016).

For the scientific community, disseminati-

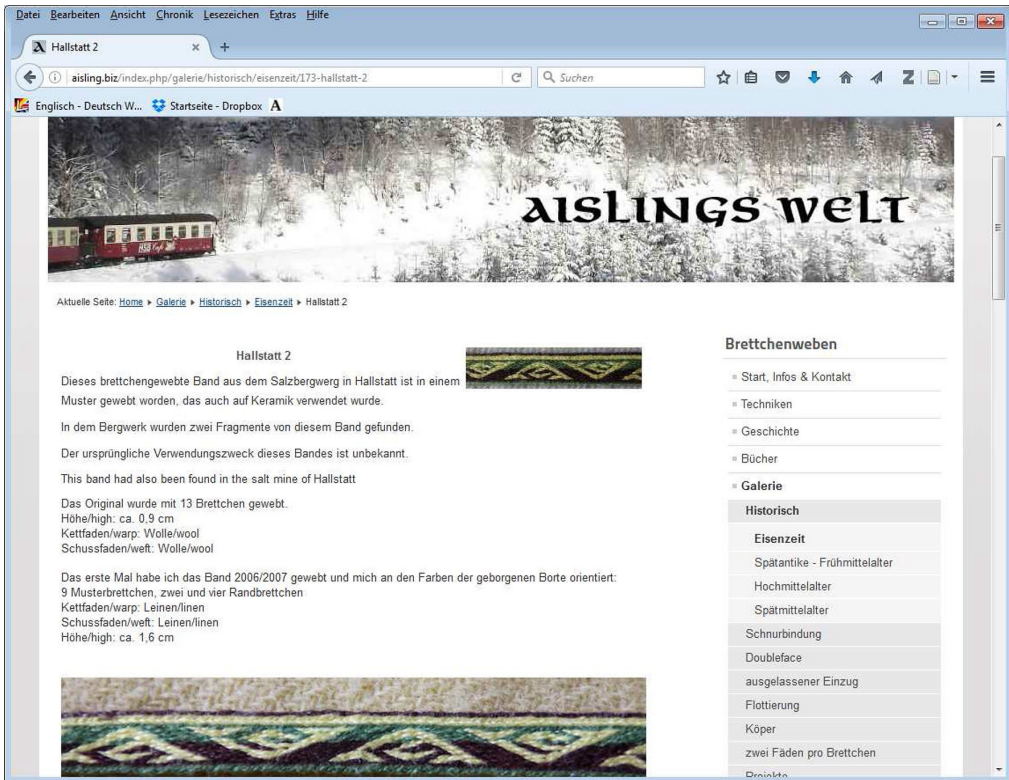


Fig. 8: Internet page from „Aislings Welt“ with a reference to a tablet woven band from Hallstatt. – Internetseite von „Aislings Welt“ mit Referenz zu einer Brettchenborte aus Hallstatt.

tral topic or theme. The tablet woven bands from Hallstatt have their own pin-board (Pinterest_Hallstatt_2016) (Fig. 7). Tumblr is a microblogging and social network website, where people also share photos, but also other multimedia content. According to Hallstatt textiles, the platform is used in a similar way. There people also are blogging their creative ideas how to use historic tablet-woven bands in modern life (Tumblr_Hallstatt_2016). People pinning on those picture sharing websites usually do not refer to academic publications, but sometimes the origin is mentioned with keywords such as “Hallstatt textile” or “celtic tablet weave”. For pinterest and tumblr users, the playful and creative aspect of working with handcraft and “old”, “interesting looking” textiles seems to be the main focus.

Private homepages

Private websites with contents relating to Hallstatt textiles can be found mainly with people interested in handcraft or Living History. Sometimes they contain detailed galleries with pictures of how to recreate the archaeological textiles, accompanied by technical descriptions.

There are a lot of cases where short introductions about the textile techniques are given, sometimes even the archaeological background is referred to (e.g. Sangre_Aguierre_2016) along with academic references.

An example of this can be seen on the homepage Aislings Welt. Silvia ‚Aisling‘ Ungerechts, a tablet weaver from Germany, runs a website with focus on tablet weaving. Her main interest is on diverse

tablet weaving techniques, history of the technique and also on original finds. There are several sub-pages explaining archaeological textile finds, their context and technical details of her recreations, also referring to scientific publications (e.g. Aisling_Hallstatt_2016) (Fig. 8).

Internet forums

Internet forums are used to hold conversations in the form of posted messages by people world-wide. A discussion forum is hierarchical or tree-like in structure: a forum can contain a number of subforums, each of which may have several topics. Within a forum's topic, each new discussion started is called a thread, and can be replied to by as many people as so wish (Wiki_Internetforum_2016).

There are different internet forums used by archaeologists (e.g. Archäologieforum_AT_2016; Forum_Archäologie_2016; see also KIRCHER 2012) with a wide range of posts from academic discussions about finds to practical problems, reference to conferences, publications and the like. Re-enactment groups, Living History and DIY groups often run websites to share and exchange knowledge about specific questions. There, archaeologists and other scientists may share the discussions, offering first-hand-information.

For textiles, especially for re-enactment and Living History groups, the exchange of information about “authentic” cloth and pattern types of different historic periods plays a major role. Pictures, links, detailed information about archaeological backgrounds, sources, museums and publications are shared on forums. On some sub-pages intensive discussions about how to recreate certain objects can be read.

One example, of the way that textiles are discussed can be seen on Kelticos.org, which describes itself as a “Forum for Iron Age Studies and Prehistoric Europe”. It is

a forum run by archaeology students who are also involved in re-enactment. The thread >“Art and Industry in the Iron Age” > “Ancient crafts: Working with Textiles” contains a sub-page about a tablet woven band from Hallstatt. There, along with reference to the original find, the reproduction of the band is described, with details to technical aspects. Pictures are also presented, both of the archaeological find as well as of the reproduction steps, including test-weaving, dyeing and tricks for tablet weaving. A long conversation (January 2009 to last post in September 2009) followed with likes and dislikes. In the comments it was also asked if the band can be ordered by the metre (see Kelticos_2016).

Further perspectives

It has been the aim of this short paper to reflect on the response to archaeological textiles, their scientific research and experiments by the public. It is interesting to see what happens after archaeologists complete their scientific work – after publication and presentation. For textiles, it can be noted that there is an impact, not only in the scientific community, but also in the non-academic world. Within the last 20 years, the World Wide Web has played a major role in the dissemination of academic results.

For the Hallstatt textiles, different lines of response can be followed. People interested in handcraft and DIY share pictures and “recipes” of textiles, patterns and textile techniques, especially tablet woven ones. Pinterest, tumblr and other picture share websites are active here, but also private websites, sometimes presenting high quality details. Websites referring to Hallstatt textiles and pins on pinterest are created by people world-wide, including Korea, Australia and USA.

On Pinterest, usually the aesthetic values and the handcraft challenge is of interest,

the historical perspective is no more than a footnote. Reenactors and people interested in Living History have another focus. For them, the use and reception of "authentic" historical textiles and techniques reflect their need for authenticity in a complex world.

Commercial companies like Fa. Gössl and Fa. Retzl from Austria might use a reference to the Hallstatt textiles to underline a statement for the value of tradition, traditional handcraft as part of their corporate identity. That might also be a response to globalisation and a counterpart to the world-wide fashion economy.

On the part of the researcher, it is important to get such a feedback, that people get involved in the results of scientific projects with analytical studies as well as Experimental Archaeology. The feedback by people world-wide also can gain new ideas for research (see article Karisto and Grömer, in this volume).

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