

# Textile Economy And Cloth Consumption



Textile production had always been considered to be a prime mover of world economy and a mirror of global developments. Natural fibre resources, population density, political circumstances, customs, wage levels, technical achievements and transport facilities were and still are crucial for the rise and fall of textile centres all over the globe.

For centuries Haslach had a certain importance on the international textile market. Being at the crossroads between Bohemia, Bavaria and Linz, it was the centre of the linen trade in the Upper Mühlviertel and was in constant contact with other textile centres especially with Bohemia and Silesia.

As early as 1341 Haslach was granted market rights and thus had the privilege to hold weekly and yearly markets. A large Nikolai market was held on December 6 – the feast-day for the patron saint of the weavers. Traders from several countries came to Haslach to purchase the local linen. The foreign influences they brought with them were a window to the world for the town and made for a certain openness.

Initially the weavers themselves had been offering their wares, but then the linen drapers took over and the weavers were caught in ever greater dependence on this putting-out system. Even today the facades of houses on the market place of Haslach bear witness to the wealth of the drapers who profited the most from the linen trade.

Some of the mechanisms that characterise the global textile market have a long history. For hundreds of years textiles were hauled across countries and exotic materials brought to us. What has changed is the speed, the means of transport and above all the quantities. Once there were only a few precious textiles for a chosen few, now mass products for our day-to-day life are traded globally.

Textiles from bygone times impress with their high-quality, their thread count and the complexity of weave and pattern. It was firmly fixed in the minds of the consumers that quality and longevity had to have priority in making cloth. Today we tend to buy more textiles with a short life-span, at the same time we spend less money on our clothes. However, we are beginning to feel a reverse trend and the awareness of worth and quality of textiles is increasing.