



Hillesvåg Wool Spinning Mill

Feasibility study



Bergen - 15th October 2012

Hillesvåg Wool Mill



Figure 1. The past: Hillesvåg Wool Spinning Mill and its surroundings, all freight to and from the mill used to be transported by rowing boat.



Figur 2. Hillesvåg Wool Spinning Mill today

Hillesvåg Wool Spinning Mill is an enterprise with long traditions. Established in 1898 by Mikkel Myhr, the mill today is run by the fourth generation of the family.

Background

Mikkel Myhr started out as merchant selling supplies to workers in nearby Dale, where a wool spinning mill had been established some years earlier. With an eye open for business opportunities, he found a property near his home at Lindås with access to a good-sized river, which he bought from local farmers. When Mikkel Myhr offered to buy the property, the farmers saw the benefits of selling their wool locally. With the new mill near by farmers took the opportunity to increase their sheep population, which benefited their own finances as well the mill's. Water from the river provided power for the machines up until the 1960s, at which point the mill became attached to the public electrical power grid.

Traditional production

Early production (and still existing) included spinning yarn for knitting and weaving. At an early time the mill also weaved homespun and cheviot woolen fabrics, but this production ceased during the 1960s.

Historical relevance/context

At one point the mill's significance was as a key provider of employment in the small community of Hillesvåg. There were at this time many other village wool mills of this kind across the country as well as across Europe.

Today, the wool spinning mill is one of the very few remaining enterprises of its kind. Across Norway only four other wool-processing factories are still operating today and these are for the most part, fully automatic. At Hillesvåg we find a unique work place where each operation in the process of manufacturing the wool, *is done manually*.

Wool production museums in Norway

Nationally, there still exist a few wool processing museums, amongst them two significant ones: *Sjølingstad Uldvarefabrik* (wool mill) and *Salhus Tricotagemuseum* (knitting mill). Both museums are located in their original beautiful buildings and are operated with good accessibility for visitors. Sjølingstad is located in the far south of Norway. The Wool Spinning Mill demonstrates operating machinery and they sell a small production of beautiful blankets plus other items.



Figure 3. Sjølingstad Wool Spinning Mill in southern Norway

Salhus Knitting Mill is a 20 minute drive from Hillesvåg. The museum has the status of national cultural heritage site and has a small production for showcasing.



Figur 4. Salhus Knitting Mill is 15 km from Hillesvåg

Both museums / factories are part of a historical industrial environment, with a variety of surrounding buildings related to the mill: housing for workers, school building, shops, medical care and infrastructure historical sites such as the ferry quay, road building history etc.

The museums aim to display not only the tale of the immediate mill history but also to a large extent, the everyday lives inside and outside of the factories in small, secluded industrial communities.

Hillesvåg and Salhus – competition or cooperation?

What distinguishes Hillesvåg from nearby Salhus national museum?

- Hillesvåg is run as a private business, which employs 17 full time staff without any kind of financial support from the government or any other source
- The wool spinning mill has full production every week day
- The production is done on ancient machinery, giving the employees a hands-on competence that is unique in the country
- The employees have a unique competence of knowledge of wool qualities as well as important knowledge about the national and international market
- Hillesvåg employees know their history, but are particularly knowledgeable about the present-day wool industry
- Unlike staff at traditional museums, the artisans at Hillesvåg need to safeguard their own future. Thus, they always need to know what lies ahead in their market. They represent development as well as innovation and continuity.

We regard it as very important that Hillesvåg wool spinning Mill continues its independent existence as a small commercial enterprise. Hillesvåg is a well-run business against all odds, within a textile industry where all but a few have relocated abroad, mainly to Asian countries.



Figure 5. Ancient machinery (1890) still going strong
Production of wool for felting.

Localities

The Mill

The building is one with many rooms, nooks and crannies. The mill as we see it today, is based on the two original houses that have over time been joint together and expanded as new needs arose. Today the building is raised four stories high, each level presenting a new adventure for the visitors.

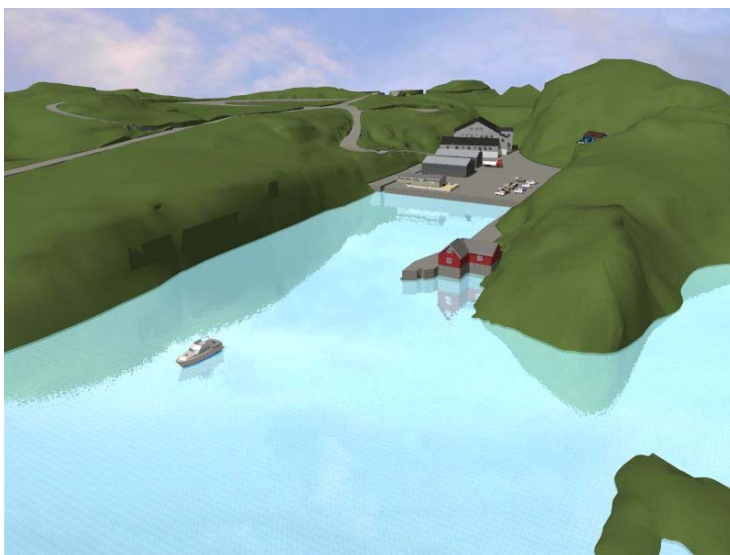
The new craft- and education house

The multi-purpose house located on the quay, serves among other things as a community centre for locals interested in knitting, felting and other wool related crafts, for example: Nordhordland craft society. It is also used for seminars and courses. It can sit 50 people. There are kitchen facilities and restrooms also for the disabled. This warm, clean, open space is a particularly good asset for the Hillesvåg Wool Spinning Mill, Economusee. It will be used for welcoming groups of visitors / tourists for information and catering purposes.

General accessibility

Hillesvåg Wool Spinning Mill is located in Lindås municipality, a 40 minutes' drive from the centre of Bergen. Arriving at Hillesvåg, there is a large parking lot with space for big buses as well as about 20-25 cars. The woolen mill itself has welcomed visitors for a long time. The management loves to show visitors around and the staff is friendly and welcoming. It seems that each and every one who works at the woolen spinning mill is proud and happy about their work place. This contributes to making it into a very special experience for visitors.

Guiding an interested tourist around the full four floors of production is very time consuming and professionally planned adjustments would be welcomed for both staff and management, something which would benefit the visitors as well.



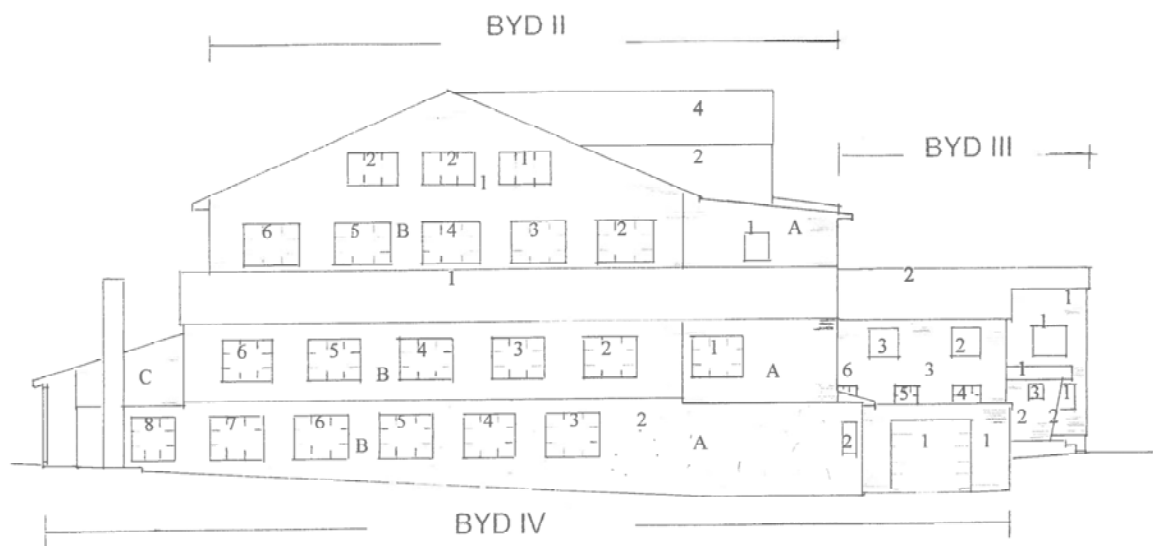
Tourism

Destination NORDHORDLAND is often called the coastal pearl between Bergen and the Sognefjord. The district of Nordhordland opens itself to a magnitude of coastal culture and history from the sea and the fjord to the mountains, as well as from Viking age to the modern day fairy tale of the oil and gas at Mongstad petrochemical center. There are numerous exciting experiences to be found in a fantastic island district at the edge of the North Sea.

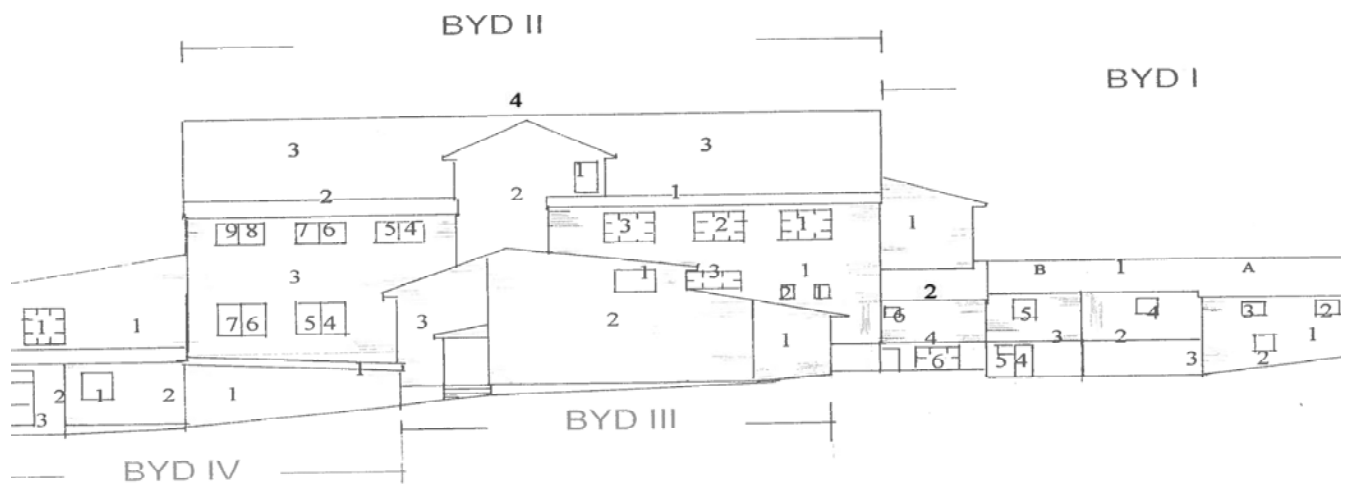
Hillesvåg is to be found close by the main coastal road from Bergen to the Northern areas of the West coast, with a large number of cars passing by throughout the year. In the summer it's one of the main tourist arteries along the coast. The visitor potential is therefore very big both for international and national tourists as well as for day trippers from Bergen



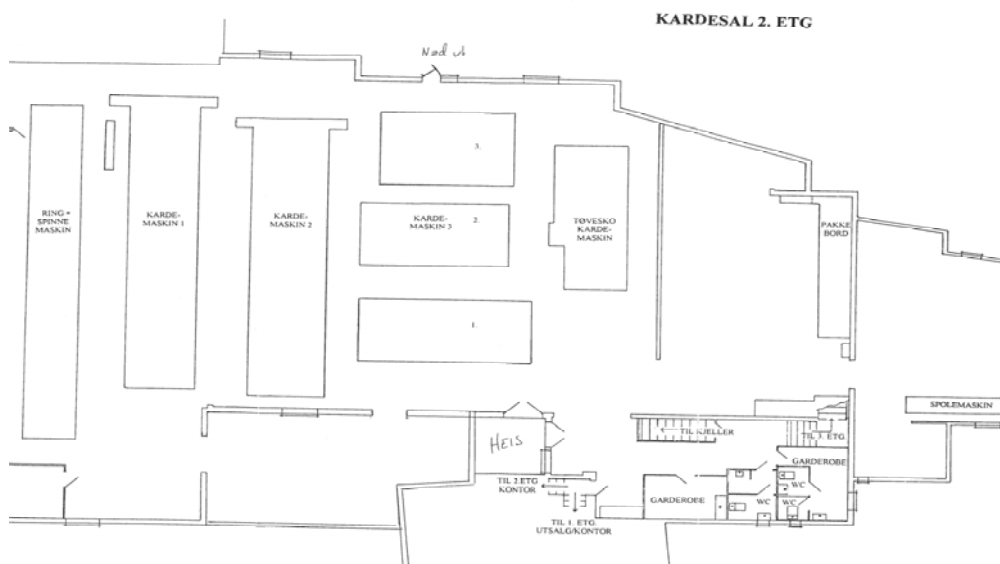
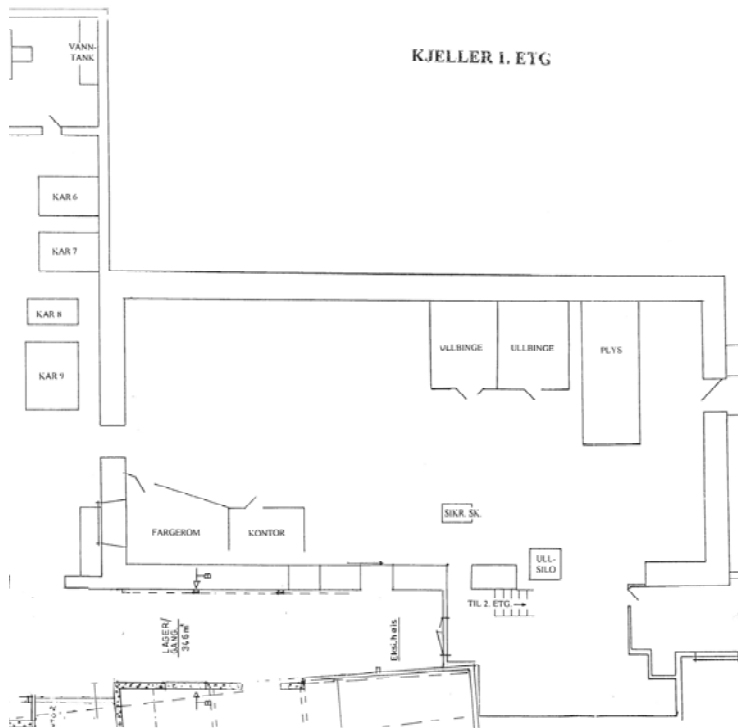
Buildings



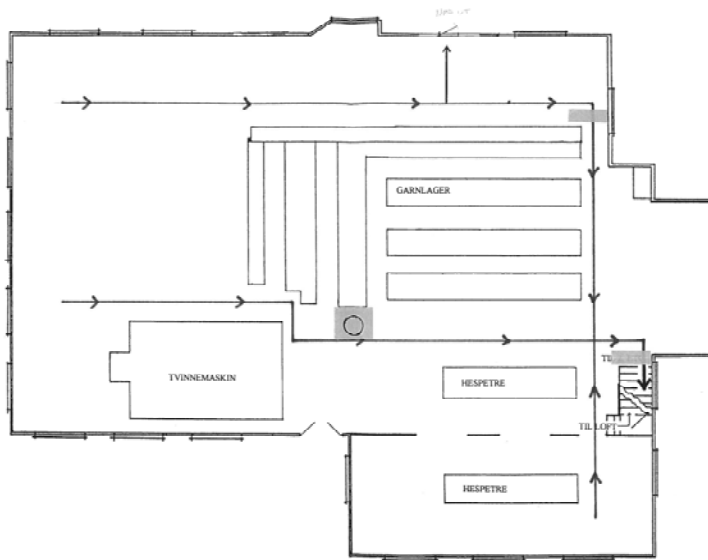
Sør



Øst

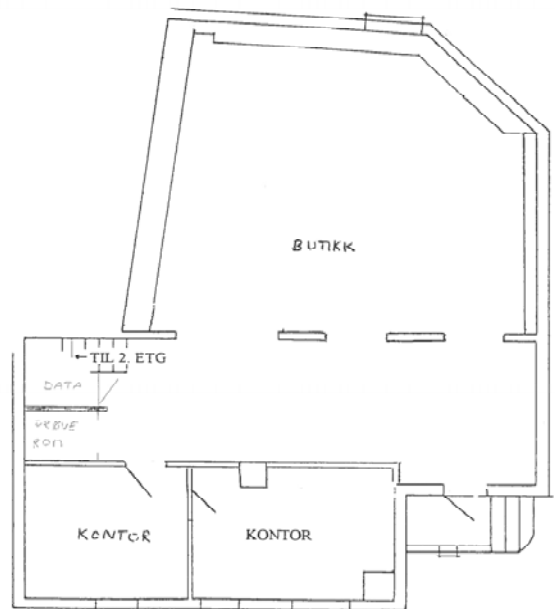
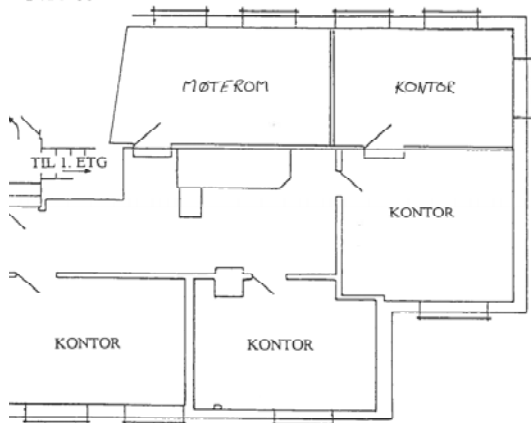


3. ETG

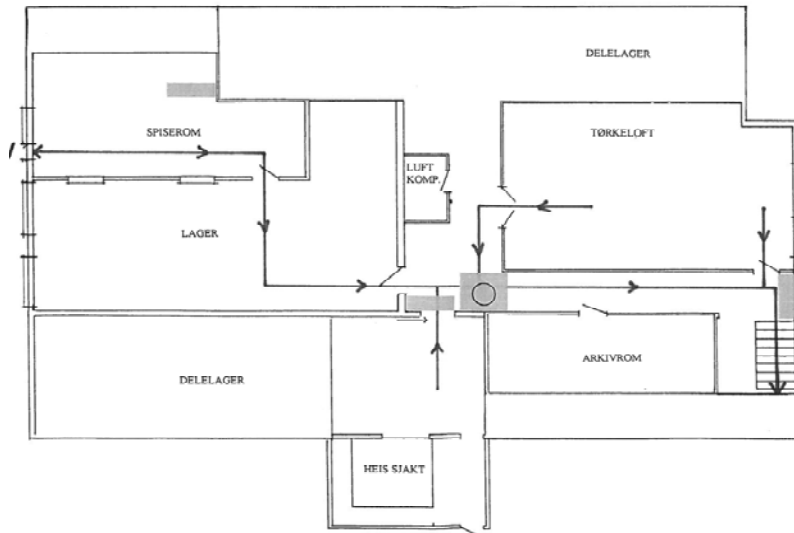


KONTOR BYGG

- Nr. 09



LOFT 4. ETG



Accessibility for visitors with disabilities

The shop and ground level floor of the mill is available for visitors using wheelchairs. However the mill allows regular access to visitors on all four levels to experience and interpret the history and the daily work. Also the multi-purpose community centre is well adjusted for easy wheelchair access from the quay, plenty of room to move around inside and a restroom with the required space for a wheelchair.

It is not a requirement for private businesses to facilitate disabled visitors. However, if at all possible it is an aim to make new Économusées as accessible as possible, for all visitors.

Safety

A requirement for the Économusée organization to include Hillesvag, has to do with safety adjustments. The ancient machinery is a wonderful sight but also a safety hazard. We will have to put up some kind of physical fencing in order to keep visitors at a safe distance from the machines.



Implementation of the six components

Reception

The reception will be at the entrance of the laundry, this is where guided tours start out today. With some physical adjustments this will become a pleasant and welcoming area. Panels in the reception area will include a presentation of the family history and a plan of the guided walk, which takes place through the mill.

Workshop

The workshop is defined as the whole mill, except the shop. As the mill consists of three floors in addition to the ground floor, we will make the main presentation on the ground and first floor, where the main activity happens. The steps of the work process will be explained as we move through the mill.

The ground floor

Activities are:

- Dyeing of wool and yarn. The mill receives scoured yarn from England, but it is also possible to process small quantities of yarn from raw wool. For the most part they use the facilities to dye yarn.
- Sorting and processing of wool, by a system probably unlike any other. A lot of the machinery is made on site by clever engineering. The visit can become a technical wonder story for the interested and requires a carefully designed interpretation panel.
- Package storage for mail or transportation. Hillesvåg has in fact customers all across the world.
- Ground floor shop

The first floor

Activities are:

- Carding. a) Carding of wool for spinning, b) Carding of wool for felting.
- Spinning thread for knitting-yarn and weaving.
- Shop/storage felting wool

The second floor

Activities are:

- Spooling / inductor
- Assembling of yarn on the “spinners weasel”
- Finishing spun yarn in different qualities and thicknesses
- Storage area
-

The third floor

Activities are:

- Washed and dyed yarn hung to dry on traditional wooden racks
- Yarn is labeled and packed by hand

Historical exhibition

The history of the wool spinning mill will be presented at the entrance.

The theme for the exhibition will be the practical work process happening at the mill, and the history of this particular mill. Bearing in mind the close proximity to Salhus Tricotagefabrik, our Économusée will not communicate general textile industry in Norway, except from a required minimum.



Information about sheep, wool types and qualities will be presented on the first floor in connection with the redesigned shop area (*read more below*).

Contemporary design

Our cooperation partner Bergen Art College will be asked to help out with contemporary design and ideas for innovation. We will ask them particularly, to combine wool with other materials, such as plastic, metal, etc.

Documentation

The wool spinning mill shop keeps a small book sales corner. An interesting idea would be to combine a “read and buy” unit. This unit will be implemented with the redesigned shop.

Shop

Today there are two different shop areas. One is on the ground floor; the other is on the first floor.

The ground floor shop sells yarn from the mill as well as numerous wool and felt products from other producers. All products are relevant to the theme of the mill, many of them are designer clothes made by craft producers who use Hillesvåg products.

The first floor shop consists mainly of felting wool as well as other products from the mill. The area needs to be redesigned – it needs better logistics for the benefit of both customer and the staff.

An idea is to keep the shop local; i.e. only sell products from the mill. The shop area is big and there is room for:

- Exhibit about wool qualities, including cool sheep pictures, and Norwegian sheep history
- Library/documentation together with a small book shop
- Contemporary design by art students at Bergen Art College



Economic Results 2010-12, Budget proposals and investments 2012-13

Annual Results	In NOK	
	2010	2011
Sales income (total)	15 119 631	14 713 887
Shop	1 901 856	1 789 042
Capital cost	4 163 767	3 635 493
Labour cost	6 612 617	6 600 734
Write off	195 484	194 000
Other operating cost	3 924 321	3 628 696
Total costs	14 896 190	14 058 903
Result	223 441	654 984
Result (profit)	-79 297	234 250
Projections*		
Budget 2012 to 2013	2 012	2 013
Sales income (total)	14 700 000	15 500 000
Shop	1 900 000	2 500 000
Capital cost	3 600 000	3 800 000
Running costs	10 700 000	11 100 000
Result	400 000	600 000
Result (profit)	100 000	200 000
Economusee Investment projections	2 012	2 013
Investment commitment 2013	200 000	400 000
Own labour, construction work etc..	50 000	150 000
Sum total investment	250 000	550 000

* Budget and investment projections comments

Hillesvåg serves both wholesalers and private customers and also all buyers in between the two market segments. Knitting and wool crafts seem to be very trendy internationally at the moment, but the woolen spinnery has very small margins towards the larger buyers, and therefore the company now focuses much more on the private small scale market, something that fits very well into the intentions of an Economusee. Many of the knit ware companies in Norway disappear by themselves either by moving to a low cost country or by closure. Therefore Hillesvåg woolen mill must always refocus their market efforts and restructure their production according to the trends of the time, costs and the

market. Only few years ago, most of the production at Hillesvåg went to the relatively big producers of final knit ware products in Norway. To deliver to private individuals is a more costly production effort considering the extra need and requirements of marketing and services etc., but the margins are still bigger. This new company strategy was formed some years ago, and such big restructuring changes always take time as well as being a natural part of the development process of a company. Hillesvåg will still serve the needs of bigger knit ware companies as long as they will exist.

However, the Hillesvåg feasibility has focused on the shop/boutique turnover because it is easier to measure and also more relevant as to the effects of being transformed into an Economusee. Increased marketing effects of being an Economusee in an international branded network of artisan craftsmen and an increased number of visitors will also provide more internet sale.

Much of the investments which will be done in relation building changes and physical adoptions for visitors will be accounted as maintenance costs and will therefore not affect the the economic result in negative manners, according to the accounting principles we use. Hillesvåg woolen mill believes that the transformation process is very sensible and that it will provide good future returns of their investments.