Linkage via Handmade Socks: Yenikaraagac Village in Bursa

∗BILGE MERVE AKTAS, ILGIM VERYERI ALACA
KOC UNIVERSITY, Turkey

This paper proposes an alternative sales network for handmade socks for the case of Yenikaraagac which used to be a significant socks production center in Bursa province in western Turkey. Due to the dramatic decline in wearing and making socks all across Turkey, Yenikaraagac villagers have been struggling to find new occupational opportunities. With our project we aim to support the villagers’ economic development while preserving intangible cultural heritage and craftspeople.

Bursa, a recently nominated world cultural heritage site, has been a migration spot and multi-layered structure of the city has influenced arts, crafts, design, and social habits in the region. The Yenikaraagac case distinguishes with its high productivity and gender equality in socks knitting until late 20th century. As an atypical example, in Yenikaraagac knitting was not only associated with women but also with men. However, mass-produced socks have downgraded wearing handmade socks. Although, current conditions discourage male/female villagers from nominating knitting as an occupation, a group of craftspeople still knit socks to gain extra income. Yet, the relation between men and knitting has been fading despite the older generations’ expertise on knitting.

Our project integrates almost extinct culture of socks knitting and male knitters to sustain their rare culture and working cycle. To promote Yenikaraagac as a cultural landscape, we use informative and directive postcards that also revise knitters’ sales network and reach the audience who has not been involved in the rural sphere. The postcards have examples of traditional socks and a map of the village to provoke people to visit the village and experience the intangible cultural heritage on site. On one side, expanding the market will improve villagers’ economic well being and sustain the craft and knowledge.

Keywords: local development, sustainable craft, handmade socks, Bursa

∗Presenting author