

Sustainable Innovation 2016

21st International Conference

'Circular Economy' Innovation & Design

7th – 8th November 2016

University for the Creative Arts

Epsom, Surrey, UK

www.cfsd.org.uk



Exploring Potential Directions for Revitalizing and Sustaining Craft Design and Production in the Ankara Castle Area.

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Crafts have been the main mode of production in pre-industrialized cultures for centuries. However, the automation and the expansion of mass-production processes necessitated the need for the division of labor by separating the craft-based production processes into parts to increase the productivity (Dormer, 1997). This in turn has led to the replacement and/or disappearance of a great variety of crafts around the world, as the crafts have been seen as an outdated mode of production being labor intensive, expensive and time-consuming (Metcalf, 2007, p.6).

In the era of emerging production methods and technologies that have been mainly shaped by industrialization and consumption, the traditional crafts have the potential to make significant contribution to sustainability in terms of empowering local skills and knowledge. Since, these offer design solutions tailored to diverse local needs, tastes and preferences at the batch production scale, and allow post-use services at the local and regional levels including repair, reuse, recovery and refurbishment derived from context specific local approaches that are often socially, environmentally and economically gratifying (Chudasri, Walker & Evans, 2012).

This paper will present findings and insights emerged from a graduate research with a particular focus on exploring the potential contribution of design to the empowerment of craft skills and knowledge for sustainability. The site of the Ankara Castle in Turkey has been identified and addressed as the focus of the field research, which is a major craft production area with historical, cultural and socio-economic significance. Within the context of the design research, several observations and in-depth interviews have been conducted with the craftspeople (hammock maker, basket weavers, calligraphic wood marquetry maker, etc.) in that specific location. In order to gain a holistic understanding of the context of the study area, current craft skills and knowledge in terms of crafts people's practices, products, working conditions, needs, expectations, etc. have been explored and assessed to gain further insights considering the implications of localization for sustainability. Finally, drawing on this knowledge, design directions and considerations will be developed and presented through translating the findings and conclusions from the field research into initial design explorations through following a research through design approach.