

THE VILLAGE OF MISI: A CULTURAL HUB OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF AN EXPANDING TURKISH METROPOLIS



EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE ATTRACTIVENESS
HISTORY MEMORY INCLUSION **WOMEN**
SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE RENEWAL

1. Context

Nilüfer is a District of Bursa Province, in North-Western Turkey. Bursa is a historical city, founded in the Hellenistic Period by the Bithynian kings, and it was the first capital of the Ottoman sultans in the 14th century.

Nilüfer Municipality, founded in 1987, is one of the seventeen districts of Bursa Metropolitan Municipality. Its name originates from Nilüfer river bordering central Bursa and Nilüfer, which also



owes its name to a bridge constructed by Lady Nilüfer, wife of the Ottoman sultan Orhan, conqueror of Bursa. It hosts one of the first locations of settled rural life in the 7th millenium B.C. (Aktopraklık Mound), the ancient Greek city of Apollonia, inhabited almost uninterruptedly until today, and the village of Kite (today Ürünlü), headquarter of a Byzantine governor and the first castle serving as administrative center for the Ottomans.

Today, Nilufer is the fourth largest urban centre of Turkey with an accelerating population growth rate. Almost entirely rural until the 1970s, the District has since been largely urbanized and industrialized, encompassing five organized industrial zones and Uludağ State University campus. It is administratively divided into 64 quarters, half urban and half rural areas. With more than 400 000 inhabitants, Nilüfer District distinguishes itself by its planned urban areas, social infrastructure, cultural dynamism and implementation of wide-ranged cultural protection projects.

THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE PROMOTION OF CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION THROUGH CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, EDUCATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL SPACES WHERE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES MAY EXPRESS FREELY ARE AMONG NILÜFER TOP DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES.

2. Nilüfer and culture

In addition to its commitment towards the protection of the cultural heritage, the Municipality has engaged to create or reinforce organic ties between the city and its territory (urban and rural areas), by promoting efficient agricultural methods, encouraging local agricultural production, rural industry and collaboration of local producers' (especially women's associations). Nilüfer also prioritizes the protection of the environment and preservation of natural and cultural as an integral part of the natural and cultural heritage.



3. Goals and project implementation

1.1. Main aim and specific goals

The main aim of this project is to expand the scope of cultural protection in Nilüfer, by supporting the creation of ties between architectural heritage and living culture, and fostering economic development based on the sustainability and nurturing of traditional local culture through cooperation with civil society associations.

Specific goals include:

- Provide the tools for sustainable urbanization, through the preservation or revival and transmission through education of cultural heritage.
- Create places for dialogue, coexistence and interaction between traditional rural and modern urban culture, through cultural loci related to the fields of sericulture, culinary culture, photography, literature, fine arts and history.
- Citizens can get a glimpse into various aspects of the region's multicultural character in an egalitarian, respectful and non-patronizing framework, deterring the influence of populist discourses emphasizing cultural segmentation and superiority.

1.2. Development of the project

Main actions carried out

The village of Misi (today Gümüştepe Quarter) is one of the oldest settlements of Nilüfer district, hosting archaeological remains from the Byzantine period and reminiscent of the Mysian tribes. It is located at the South-East of Nilüfer, on the foothills of Bithynian Olympus (Uludağ) mountain and on the left shore of Nilüfer river, adjacent to the central (Osmanгази) district of Bursa and to newly developed Nilüfer District urban areas. The village of Misi has been reknown since the 19th century for its rural economy based on viticulture, wine production and sericulture, as well as for its traditional vernacular architecture from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. However, urban expansion, land-use



changes and emanating profit opportunities have led to the inclusion of many formerly rural settlements into the urban fabric and to the alteration of their specific character.

The Misi Cultural Program started in 2007 through the cooperation between the Misi Women Culture and Solidarity Association and Nilüfer Municipality. This was set in parallel of the Misi Protection and Sustainance Project (extensive restoration works of local architectural heritage between 2006 and 2016), and within the framework of Nilüfer cultural policy for cultural heritage protection, fostering of diversity, enhancing of creativity and transmission of knowledge. It was funded by a grant from the “Tourism is the Future” Fund, co-financed by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Anadolu Efes Company, under the name “100% Misia”. The overall budget is estimated today at more than EUR 400 000.

THE VILLAGE OF MISI WAS DECLARED A PROTECTED NATURAL AND URBAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN 1987. FURTHERMORE, EXTENSIVE RESTORATION WORKS HAVE TAKEN PLACE ALLOWING FOR THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINANCE OF MISI’S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE.

The programme started with the creation of a “Silk House” and “Cocoon House” in restored village dwellings of traditional vernacular architecture, where traditional sericulture activities of silkworm rearing, silk reeling and weaving have been revived. The project included the plantation of mulberry trees, whose leaves are used for the rearing of silkworms which, by creating cocoons, form the material from which silk thread is extracted. Skill and Cocoon House cultural centres propose courses to educate and disseminate knowledge on all the stages of sericultural production (silkworm rearing, traditional thread reeling and silk weaving on wooden weaving looms).



The revival of silk production in Misi is coupled since 2016 with the elaboration of artifacts and jewellery produced from dried cocoons,, realised during workshops provided by Nilüfer Municipality Continual Professional Education Centre (NİLSEM).

In 2017, a street festival dedicated to silk was organized in Misi with the participation of artists and weavers from silk-producing regions in Turkey: designers and industrial experts made presentations on the role of silk thread production Bursa industries and exports of cocoons and raw silk to Italy and France in the 19th century. In 2018, the Silk House planned to host a permanent exhibition on silk weaving history and sericulture from Medieval to Contemporary periods.

Apart from sericulture, members of the Misi Women Culture and Solidarity Association were also trained to prepare and serve local dishes, both in the “Cocoon House” and in installations provided by the Nilüfer Municipality along the shore of the Nilüfer river.

Local agricultural production and culinary culture is also promoted in regular (yearly) festivals organized by Nilüfer Municipality in cooperation with 26 women associations from Nilüfer District rural quarters since 2005. During the events, concerts, folklore dances, banquets with local dishes from rural regions and a “Local Tastes” contest are organized.

The serving of local dishes continues throughout the year, and together with the sale of silk and cocoon products, it constitutes the primary source of revenue for women of Misi.

Since 2014, Nilüfer Municipality initiated a new policy to create the local conditions for further cultural interactions across rural and urban populations through the foundation of “loci” (places) for cultural and artistic expression. In this context, the Nilüfer Children’s Library was founded in 2014 in a restored building in the village main square.

From 2016 to 2017, the Mysia Photography Museum, Literature Museum and Art Workshop House opened in restored traditional architecture buildings in central and peripheral areas of Misi village. They were all founded in cooperation with civil society associations from Nilüfer urban areas and



central Bursa (Osmangazi) District: Bursa Art Photography Association [BUFSAD], Bursa Literature and Art Association [BUYAZ] and Faculty of Fine Arts of Uludağ [Bursa] University.

In 2016 and 2017, two painting Workshops were hosted in the Art Workshop House and Cocoon House, hosting artists from Turkey and abroad, who conducted seminars on painting. During the seminars, the Misi Women Culture and Solidarity Association, as Well as the local population and children, were actively involved in hosting, guiding visitors and catering services.

Lastly, in 2016, a 300 km trekking, bicycle and horse-riding lane connecting rural mountain and plain settlements was established by Nilüfer Municipality, in cooperation with experienced climbers (central Bursa district mountaineering associations). This enabled to connect Misi with additional historical rural settlements, and to create cultural routes under the name “Mysian Ways”, developing eco-tourism and cultural tourism and attracting more visitors from other Turkish regions.

4. Impacts

1.1. Direct impacts

Impacts on the local government

The successful emergence of a sustainable local economy in the village of Misi, founded on cultural heritage protection, diversity and urban and rural interaction, with the active participation of the civil society in cultural policy formation, has encouraged Nilüfer Municipality to further collaborate with the civil society in local governance and, particularly, to strengthen civil society’s role in the planning and implementation of cultural policies in urban or rural areas.

Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

Cooperation with local governments, social emancipation, economic welfare and quality of life has led to rise of self-confidence, entrepreneurial spirit and public presence among members of rural civil society organizations and particularly among women of rural origin.



Impact on the territory and population

Resistance from the population arised at the start of the program and since the official declaration of Misi as an “Urban Archaeological Site” in 1987, which led to the empeding of modern multistoried urban-type building construction which was perceived as economic damage to land owners. Since then, positive economic and social results (empowerment of local women and civil society associations, revenues from touristic and cultural activities, rising of living standards, interaction with highly-educated members of urban society and protection of cultural heritage) have reduced the tension.

In addition, the preservation of natural heritage and development of nature tourism in the immediate vicinity of urban areas is promising for future limitations on urbanization due to the presence of an alternative for sustainable development based on cultural heritage protection and on balanced and respectful rural and urban cultural linkages.

THE SUCCESS OF MISI CULTURAL PROGRAM HAS ALSO LED TO FURTHER COOPERATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL (RURAL) CIVIL SOCIETY ASSOCIATIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN OTHER DISTRICTS OF BURSA PROVINCE ON THE FUNCTIONALIZATION OF RESTORED ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE.

1.2. Evaluation

No evaluation mechanism has been designed or implemented.

1.3. Key factors

- The robust and well-coordinated cooperation between the local government and rural and urban civil society organizations, which interact and cooperate within the framework set by the Program.



- The fundamental focus on culture, in the forms of cultural heritage protection as well as co-existence of rural and urban cultures in the edge of an expanding urban centre.

1.4. Continuity

The Misi Cultural Program is a long-lasting initiative. The future building of a Children's Rights Centre and permanent silk history exhibition in the Silk House have been estimated at (approximately) EUR 50.000 and EUR 10.000 Euro respectively. Potentials for private sector sponsorship on fine arts and planned literature conferences and workshops are being examined as a means to introduce private sector partners and enhance economic sustainability of the program.

5. Further information

Nilüfer was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 – May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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