In the Loop 3.5 – Making Connections

From knitting samples to public policy: a case study in interconnectivity.

In this contribution we address the interconnectivity of European textile culture, exemplified by references to high and low end industrial knitting manufacture, and an international partnership project that is highlighting complex connections and transferring good practice policies across EU textile regions.

The partnership centres on Prato, Italy, a city whose textile heritage dates to the renaissance. While providing a hub for design and high-end manufacture, its 20th century wealth was based on local manufacturers establishing a reputation for the repurposing of low value second-hand knitted fabrics. Today, its textile industries can only compete by enhancing their knowledge economy, and by reconnecting to the high value design and techniques of past manufactures.

The Museo del Tessuto, based in Prato, is Italy's foremost textile museum. Built on the wealth accumulated through repurposing low value knitted goods, its central mission is to preserve the community's textile culture. It is collecting bankrupt textile company sample books; educating through exhibitions such as 'Vintage', presenting the value of creativity in the transition from recovery of used cloth to high fashion and couture; it acts as a catalyst for business innovation through European Union knowledge transfer projects. Plustex, a current project, makes a contribution to the future proofing of this increasingly fragile textile community.

Plustex is an eight partner European Union INTERREG IVC project. It aims to facilitate the exchange of policy know-how and improve local development practices to enable the competiveness of textile companies, collaborating with regional policy makers, public authorities, museums, design and craft specialists, universities and regional enterprise zones. The range of stakeholders not only attests to the diversity of the European textiles community but also how the connectivity of the community may effectively sustain business innovation and a competitive European textile industry.

Key words:

Textiles, Competitive, Industry, Connectivity, Community