

Women and Their Neighbourhood: A Textile Project in Goirke-Hasselt



Foto's Petra Robben

Management

1 Project name

Vrouwen en hun wijk: textielproject in Goirke-Hasselt ('Women and Their Neighbourhood: A Textile Project in Goirke-Hasselt').allochtoon.'

2 Contact

Petra Robben, project manager;
e-mail: petra.robben@tilburg.nl;
tel.: +31 (0)13 53 67 475 (Dutch Textile Museum, general)

3 Partner organisation

The Goirke-Hasselt Neighbourhood Organisation (WOGH) was responsible for recruiting and initially supervising the target group.

4 Partner organisation type

Museum

5 Funding

The Municipal Authority of Tilburg provided support from funds allocated to Actieplanmiddelen Cultuurbereik.

Medium

- The work of supervising artist Wilma Kuil served as a source of inspiration.
- The textile work, the result of a collaborative effort, was put on display during the museum exhibition. A video recording of the preparation process was also shown. The video gave viewers a good idea of the mutual cooperation involved.



- Industrial (the Textile Museum) and non-material heritage (the participants' contributions).

▢ Project

1 Aims / objectives

The main aim of the project was to provide women of different nationalities living in the same neighbourhood with the opportunity to collaborate on a single work of art. The objective was to use the work of art to show the similarities and commonalities between the modes of expression employed by various cultures. Other objectives included contributing to social orientation, the participants' proficiency in Dutch and their personal development. Another goal entailed providing information about the museum.

2 Who it was for

The target group for the exhibition was broad and general.

3 What learning was involved

The group process stimulated social and psychological abilities, while the activity itself required the use of artistic, spatial and motor skills.

4 Which methodologies used

A practically oriented and social way of learning. The productive character of the project lent an experimental quality to it. Aesthetic and narrative aspects were also involved.

5 Where/when it was

The Dutch Textile Museum [Het Nederlands Textielmuseum], Tilburg, The Netherlands. It lasted from January to June 2003. The exhibition ran from 12 April 2003 to 4 May 2003.

6 Planning / preliminary work

The project resulted from initial meetings between the Textile Museum and the Goirke-Hasselt Neighbourhood Organisation [*Wijkorganisatie Goirke-*

Hasselt] (WOGH). Initially, the aim of these exploratory talks was to coordinate hopes, ambitions and objectives. Ultimately, it was decided to launch a women's textile project.

When the project plan was composed, it was decided that, owing to reasons involving funding, it would be best if a single organisation were appointed to manage the project. The Textile Museum took on this role. The WOGH's contribution was included in the budget, and the organisation's involvement was explicitly stated in all publicity material.

Project follow-up: In the meantime, a second, smaller-scale workshop was given in December 2003 under the supervision of Marie Massip in connection with the European exchange project Equal, which has a French partner organisation. In January 2005, an industrial designer gave a third workshop. In May 2005, a fourth workshop will be organised, focusing on an exhibition on Barbie and Action Men.

7 *Any exhibition / art / artefacts involved*

The participants created their own work of art.

8 *Involvement of other partner organisation*

Artist Wilma Kuil provided the participants with a structure, but they were free to experiment with materials, forms and techniques.

9 *Key words to reflect the concept of the project*

'Diversity transcends nationality.'

D Type of project

Nearly all the senses played a role: touch (locomotion and precision) and sight. The senses of smell and hearing were also involved in interactive communication and in acquiring experience. Because of the material used (textile), the eye and the tactile organ were vital to the viewers' perception of the final work during the exhibition.

Website : www.textielmuseum.nl

D Roughly how many people were involved?

1 *As direct participants*

18. Approximately twenty women of various cultural backgrounds living in the Goirke-Hasselt district/Bouwmeester neighbourhood [*Bouwmeester buurt*] in the Dutch city of Tilburg.

2 *As indirect beneficiaries*

Approximately one hundred people attended the project opening.

3 *As staff*

Project manager Petra Robben, artist Wilma Kuil, photographer Liedeke Kruk and two WOGH community education workers.

D Participants' ages

Ages ranged from 23 to 70. All participants with a dual cultural background

were under 40; the group included a number of elderly Dutch participants.

▢ Disadvantage due to social or economic factors, discrimination or disability

1 Belonging to an ethnic minority

Approximately half the participants belonged to an ethnic minority.

2 Migration / Immigration issues

Ten of the women were Dutch, two Turkish, two Somali, one Italian, one Moroccan, one Indonesian and one from the Netherlands Antilles.

3 Learning difficulties

Overall, the participants were not highly educated but exhibited no explicit learning difficulties. One participant of foreign heritage was illiterate.

4 Mental health

Some of the women suffered from socio-emotional problems including agoraphobia, manic depression and social exclusion.

5 Unemployment

Most of the women worked at home as housewives. One or two had a part-time job.

▢ Participants' needs

The initiative arose out of talks held between the Textile Museum and the WOGH; the participants were not involved in this process. The WOGH had a more extensive and specialised history with this and other groups and thus represented the target group's interests.

▢ Outcomes and lessons learned

Overall learning points

- A first step was made in the collaboration between the museum and socio cultural organisations in general and the WOGH in particular.
- Barriers were removed and eyes opened on both sides. New projects planned for 2004 and 2005 are already under development. The participation of diverse target groups was a fundamental point in the museum's target-group policy. In addition, the museum will work with organisations in the district and the city.
- During the process stage of the project, the participants interacted a great deal. Given the participants' diverse cultural backgrounds, the project led to cultural exchange, at least on this level. It is still too soon to comment on the extent to which such an exchange will continue in the long term.

As regards the organisation, the project would not have succeeded without the involvement of the community education workers. They acted as counselors to the participants and were familiar with the backgrounds and problems of a number of women. Neither the artist nor the museum had the time or the

know-how to provide such intense guidance.

A museum and a neighbourhood organisation are fundamentally different. Collaborating entailed taking into consideration the divergent underlying objectives, aims and visions of both organisations. It was up to the project manager to reach solid agreements, on which all the parties could rely throughout the project.

A collaborative undertaking such as this can benefit from a hierarchical approach, whereby one organisation manages the project and the other assumes the role of a member of the project team. This particular structure accelerates the decision-making process and makes one of the organisations ultimately responsible.

In the end, a number of objectives proved too ambitious. For instance, insight into the surrounding area affected by historical factors and the social frame of reference can be gained only if a follow-up project involving the same group of participants were carried out. The ambition to bolster the participants' proficiency in Dutch was not fulfilled either. This goal need not be pursued as such in a follow-up project, as fostering language proficiency proved to be a secondary consideration. Promoting and consolidating interpersonal and group communication proved to be more important

When the project plan was defined, a distinction was made initially between nationalities (i.e. between Dutch and non-Dutch participants). During the project, it became apparent that diversity transcends national identity. Interculturalism is more than just a difference in skin colour.