

TEX- TALES

QUALITY ANALYSIS OF CREATIVE
COLLABORATIONS WITH PEOPLE
AFFECTED BY WAR

Hochschule Luzern
Written thesis
Mentor: Alexis
Schwarzenbach
2019

Isabeau Goddé
Molenvloed 39
2230 Herselt (BE)
+32476451285
isabeau.godde@
hotmail.com
Textile design
35.131 characters
6th semester,
20/05/2019

Table of contents

Introduction	3
On creative collaboration	5
What is a creative collaboration?	7
Quality criteria	8
Purpose	8
Process	8
Outcome	9
Aftermath	10
On working with people affected	
by war	10
Possible difficulties and solutions	11
Adaptation of the quality criteria	13
Analysis of collaborations with	
people affected by war	15
Thread Bearing Witness	19
Common Threads Project	23
Personal project	27
Conclusion	33
Bibliography	35

Introduction

At the end of 2017, worldwide 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict or war. This is the highest number on record and has increased with nearly 10 million since 2014 in spite of the decline in the number of conflicts worldwide. In other words, conflicts remain a great cause of destruction, human suffering and displacement.¹

“Words and narrative alone often cannot adequately capture the realities and complexities of conflict and migration-related experiences”.² Moreover, creative practices offer a vocabulary to depict one’s experiences visually. For example, narrative textiles, also known as story cloths, can document the horrors of warfare and tell the stories of its victims and participants.³ Such textiles express one’s perspective on an event and one’s vision on life after the violence ends.⁴ The objective of a story cloth is to serve as alternative form of communication, which can be used to support or protest against a given event and therefore raise awareness for the consequences of the given event.⁵ Furthermore, due to its capacity to reveal trauma, a narrative textile has the tendency to encourage healing.⁶

Unfortunately, not everyone has the knowledge to create a visual narrative that addresses a social issue. Thus,

1 United Nations 2018: 14

2 Denov & Shevell 2019: 8

3 Deacon & Calvin 2014: 7

4 Ibid.: 10

5 Ibid.: 7

6 Ibid.: 11

marginalized communities, such as war-affected people, often engage in creative collaborations. In addition, due to the fact that there is a desire for activism in contemporary creative practices, creative collaborations have become more popular over the past decades.⁷ As a result, the question regarding how to determine the quality of such collaborations arises.

Since I am a textile designer who is interested in warfare and its consequences and since evaluation of collaborations is needed in order to improve them in the future, I am motivated to research the criteria that determine the quality of a creative collaboration. Therefore, this dissertation evolves around the following research question:

What are the criteria to determine the quality of a creative collaboration with war-affected people resulting in a storytelling cloth?

This question emerges from two secondary questions: What are the characteristics of a creative collaboration? and how should one interact with people affected by human conflict? These questions are addressed based on a review of the relevant literature and interviews with social workers, experienced in working with displaced people, and founders of collaborative projects with victims of warfare.

In the first part, a theoretical introduction lays out the key characteristics of a creative collaboration. This is followed by an analysis that results in the establishment of quality criteria. In the third chapter guidelines regarding interaction with people affected by warfare are clarified. Additionally, the previously established quality criteria are adapted to these guidelines. In the fourth chapter an overview of the adapted parameters is presented and three creative collaborations are assessed. In the end, a conclusion concerning the effectiveness of the criteria is presented.

⁷ Lind 2007: 17

On creative collaboration

“Collaborations are hard work. By definition, they bring together diverse partners with multiple agendas”.⁸ This definition highlights some, but not all, characteristics that define a collaboration. Hence, in order to answer the research question, it is significant to present a more elaborate description of the elements that mark a collaboration.

According to the Cambridge dictionary, collaboration is the situation of two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing.⁹ Thomas E. Backer describes this situation of two or more people working together as a temporary or permanent relationship where goals, activities, responsibilities and recourses are shared.¹⁰ Another point, addressed in *Collaboration what makes it work*, is that all partners are committed to reach a common goal and share stakes in both the process and the outcome.¹¹ This common goal could be: solving a problem, implementing or improving a program, or changing a policy or procedure.¹² Furthermore, the relationship is well-defined and mutually beneficial.

¹³ Hence, rewards are shared between the members.¹⁴ Another source claims that collaboration is based on trust and transparency.¹⁵ Moreover, communication and flexibility are important elements in a collaboration.¹⁶

8 Backer 2003: xvi

9 Collaboration 2019

10 Backer 2003: 3-4.

11 Mattessich & Johnson 2018: 77

12 Schöttle, Haghsheno & Gehbauer 2014: 1275
Backer 2003: 1

13 Mattessich & Johnson 2018: 77

14 Ibid.: 77

15 Schöttle, Haghsheno & Gehbauer 2014: 1278

16 Mattessich & Johnson 2018: 11

These definitions of a collaboration enable me to establish the following working definition: a collaboration is a temporary or permanent, well-defined, mutually beneficial relationship, based on trust and transparency, where two or more people work together to reach a common goal. Other important elements of a collaboration are communication, sharing of resources and flexibility.

What is a creative collaboration?

The previously established elements, that define a collaboration, also apply to a creative collaboration. Besides, in a creative collaboration partners work together to create something, for instance an object, concept, story or image. Not only the creative realisation of a given project is important, but also the process undertaken to establish it is significant.¹⁷ Both, process and product are inseparable.¹⁸ Creative collaborations “can occur between people, who are often, but not always, artists, as well as between artists and people from other fields altogether”.¹⁹

According to Lind, creative collaborations can occur in different formats, such as interaction, collective action and participation.²⁰ Interaction aspires that people interact with each other in order to activate an individual process “just as a single individual might interact with an apparatus by pressing a button”.²¹ Collective action stresses the acting collectively and therefore involving all collaborators in the decision-making process, whereas participation is “associated with the creation of a context in which participants can take part in something that someone else has created, but where there are, nevertheless, opportunities to have an impact”.²² Thus, the relationship between collaborators and one’s involvement in the decision-making process indicates the format of a creative collaboration.

The creative outcome cannot be defined beforehand, since it is the result of a convergence of multiple individual actions. Barnes argues that “all members are given clear choices about the content and the work within the process.”²³ Hence, all collaborators must influence the physical outcome to some degree, for example, in style, content or physical construction.²⁴ For this reason, all members have an authorial role.²⁵

17 Jones 2018: 290

18 Ibid.: 290

19 Lind 2007: 16

20 Ibid.: 17

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Barnes 2009: 36

24 Lehrman 2008: 231

25 Ibid.: 106

Quality criteria

In this subchapter the criteria that determine the quality of a creative collaboration are presented. I have developed these criteria by analysing the vision of other researchers that have studied matters in the field of collaboration. In a later chapter these parameters are used to evaluate multiple creative collaborations.

Purpose

The purpose refers to one's motives to take part in a collaboration. Partners decide to collaborate as they see it as being in their self-interest.²⁶ Thus, they expect to benefit from it. Partners should be transparent about what they expect to gain. Their expectations should be discussed in advance in order to make sure that the project will be mutually beneficial.

The main reason to collaborate is to reach a common goal. Ergo, one should not exploit a partner to solely acquire personal benefit or reach a personal goal. A creative collaboration should be founded on good intentions.

Process

Before a collaboration can take place, one should recruit members that are interested in the purpose of the project and are committed to working together to reach a goal. This recruitment can happen through different media, such as flyers, posters, e-mails, one-on-one conversations, etc. However, one should not be forced into a collaboration. A partner can only be fully committed when s/he participates voluntarily.

The main goal of a collaboration is to work together with people in order to achieve something that you could not have achieved on your own. Hence, partners should share and pool their resources and knowledge to success.²⁷

²⁶ Mattessich & Johnson
2018: 17

²⁷ Ibid.: 78

Then the structure of the relationship should be defined. All collaborators have equal value.²⁸ One's knowledge and skills will determine one's role in the collaboration. Some partners will have more dominant roles than others. For instance, someone in a leadership role needs to have "organizing, facilitation and interpersonal skills, such as emotional intelligence and cultural competence."²⁹ Thus, a partner's role will have an impact on one's involvement in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, trust is an important factor to foster a healthy working relationship. Trust-building requires mutual respect, cultural understanding and transparency.

Following this, collaborators should not forget about the human factor of a collaboration. Firstly, problems may occur and mistakes will be made.³⁰ Therefore, flexibility in both structure and method are crucial.³¹ Secondly, people may have particular needs.³² Hence, adequate support regarding the capabilities and experiences of collaborators is needed.³³

Above all, communication should be made possible. One of the most important factors in a collaboration is communication. Knowledge needs to be shared, negotiation needs to take place and decisions need to be made. Therefore, the ability to communicate with your fellow collaborators is an important feature.

Outcome

Claire Bishop argues that in today's collaborative practices the process often seems more important than the outcome, the product.³⁴ Furthermore, a work, formed through collaborative practise, cannot be a failure, unsuccessful or unresolved since its core task is to establish a social bond.³⁵ However, "the result — mediating object, concept, image or story — is the necessary link between the artist and

28 Barnes 2009: 40

29 Mattessich & Johnson 2018: 27

30 Schöttle [et al.] 2014: 1275

31 Mattessich & Johnson 2018: 20

32 Bare 2003: 147

33 Frieder 2018: 152

34 Bishop 2012: 6

35 Ibid.: 13

a secondary audience (you and I, and everyone else who did not participate)".³⁶ Therefore, I believe that the outcome of a collaboration should also be looked at. However, one should not judge the aesthetics of a collaboratively established work. When judging the outcome one should determine whether all collaborators who are represented in the work have influenced the result to some degree.³⁷ These influences can be seen in the style, subject, content, or construction of a work.

Another point regarding the outcome of a collaborative practise is the discussion about the authorship of the work. Bishop claims that there is no fixed recipe for good authorship.³⁸ However, I believe that authorship should be shared by all collaborators, since each partner brought their own set of skills, knowledge and resources to the table in order to make the creation of the result possible. Following this line of reasoning, all partners should receive credit for their contributions.

Aftermath

One of the factors that marks a collaboration is the fact that the relationship needs to be mutually beneficial. Therefore I believe that every collaborator should get something in return for the contributions that s/he has made. Examples of possible 'returns' are: the created product, money, an enhanced reputation, exposure to a certain audience, gained experience, enhancing cultural understanding, etc.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid.: 9

³⁷ Lehrman 2008: 93

³⁸ Bishop 2012: 9

³⁹ Arts Law Centre of Australia 2017: 4-5

On working with people affected by war

When working together with a community it is important to familiarize yourself with the background of this community and become aware of certain difficulties that might occur during a collaboration. People affected by war, more specifically in the context of displacement and asylum seekers, come from different backgrounds and have a certain emotional baggage.⁴⁰

Possible difficulties and solutions

The first problem that might occur is the difficulty in recruitment. Refugees and asylum seekers are a marginalized group and often hard to reach.⁴¹ Therefore, it is important to reach out personally or ask help from people that are involved in the matters of this community and are trusted by the members of this community, such as social workers.⁴² Another factor that might increase the number of collaborators is choosing an easily accessible workspace.⁴³

When working with war-affected people one should be aware of cultural differences. For instance, people from certain cultures are not used to a strict time schedule.⁴⁴ Informing yourself about the cultural background of your partners as well as agreeing on rules and standards is a must.⁴⁵

40 Aroche & Coelo 2004: 64 ff.

41 Mazur 2009: 10

42 S. Van Dael (personal communication, 25 Februari, 2019)

43 Ibid.

44 J. Van Steenberghe (interview, 5 March 2019)

45 Van der veer & Van Waning 2004: 198

Another problem that might occur is the lack of engagement. Displaced people often have other issues on their minds.⁴⁶ Enhancing their engagement is possible by actively encouraging them to get involved and offering them provision tailored to their needs, their abilities and their interests.⁴⁷ For instance, offering them simple activities with a logical task structure, clear parameters and easily accessible materials.⁴⁸ Another factor that helps sustain the interest of partners is the creation of a product that has the intention of being shared with a global audience.⁴⁹

Communication and building trust are key to overcome the previously mentioned issues.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the next obstacles that might be faced when working with people affected by war lies in these elements.

Issues in the field of communication can occur when working with displaced people. Sometimes partners don't have a fluent common language. However, they might be able to communicate in a language that is not their mother tongue. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to find a common language. When proper verbal communication cannot be attained due to a language barrier, then a translator can be used.⁵¹ This translator can be either a professional interpreter or someone from the community that masters the working language.⁵² However, participants do not always feel comfortable discussing certain matters/topics through a third person.⁵³ Another way to make communication possible is using a symbolic language marked by physical actions.⁵⁴ Activities like playing, drawing or painting can make communicating easier.⁵⁵ Discovering a symbolic language can be liberating and energising.⁵⁶ However, one should always be alert for misunderstandings.⁵⁷

Trust is an essential factor to ensure good working conditions. Gaining trust can be hard, since "recent experiences of war, torture, humiliation, flight and their present living conditions have caused many to mistrust their fellow human beings".⁵⁸

46 Mazur 2009: 12

47 Ibid.: 11

48 Jones 2018: 295

49 Frieder 2018: 201

50 Mazur 2009: 10

51 Van der veer & Van Waning 2004: 199

52 J. Van Steenbergen (interview, 5 March 2019)

53 Ibid.

54 Smagala 2009: 30

55 Wertheim-Cahen, Van Dijk, Schouten, Roozen & Droždek 2004: 440

56 Smagala 2009, p. 30

57 Van der veer & Van Waning 2004, p. 198

58 Wertheim-Cahen [et al.] 2004: 421

Building a trustful relationship with displaced people starts by respecting their privacy and treating them like people first.⁵⁹ Furthermore, showing interest in a partner's culture, by learning a few words, such as words of greeting and saying goodbye, in their mother tongue, can contribute to the establishment of a trustful relationship.⁶⁰

As mentioned before, displaced people have been exposed to traumatic experiences. This should not be forgotten when working with war-affected people.⁶¹ Addressing these traumatic experiences can be part of a collaboration, especially when there is a focus on the past. Firstly, one should be aware that discussing these horrifying experiences can cause mental damage and thus lead to depressive reactions.⁶² Therefore, the involvement of people that are professionally trained to work with victims of trauma is necessary.⁶³ Secondly, asking people to let their defences come down requires "a 'safe container', with a structure designed for healing and learning, that can easily be put into place and built with very little infrastructure".⁶⁴

Adaptation of the quality criteria

As presented in the previous chapter, war-affected people require a certain support. Therefore, it is significant to adapt some of the earlier established quality criteria to the needs of people affected by human conflict.

First of all, recruitment should be done in person or by people that are closely connected to the community. The participation remains voluntary. Second, not only activities should be kept simple, but also materials, needed to fulfil tasks, should be provided by the facilitator. Third, a feeling of safety among all collaborators must be established. Hence, a certain amount of time should be invested in trust-building. Besides, activities must take place in a 'safe

59 Mazur 2009: 10

60 Van der veer & Van Waning 2004: 199

61 Frieder 2018: 153

62 Turkovic, Hovens & Gregurek 2004: 238

Barnes 2009: 40

63 Barnes 2009: 40

64 Jones 2018: 294

container', preferably on an easy-to-reach location. Above all, measures that serve the needs of war-affected people must be taken. For instance, involving translators when the language barrier is too great, or involving a mental health counsellor when addressing trauma.

Analysis of collaborations with people affected by war

I have decided to analyse creative collaborations with people affected by war that result in the creation of narrative textiles. The following projects will be discussed: Alice Kettle's Thread bearing witness, Rachel Cohen's Common threads projects and my personal Threads of a journey to a better life.

Other creative collaborations that could have been analysed are: Arthelps' Unhide, Kateřina Šedá's Nedá se svítit, Artolution's Syrian Refugee Public Art Initiative, or Martta Leskelä's Ragmate. The first project is a collaboration between creatives, 'Arthelpers', and children living in a refugee camp near Mosul.⁶⁵ Together they designed a print that depicts the hopes, dreams and fears of the children. At first sight this project fits the selection criteria, but as the organisation did not respond to my request for further information in time it cannot be discussed here. Nedá se svítit is a collaboration between Kateřina Šedá and the inhabitants of a little Czech village, Nošovice.⁶⁶ This interaction results in narrative textiles, but the people of the community are not affected by war. The third collaboration, Artolution's Syrian Refugee Public Art Initiative, brings together Syrian artists, educators and young refugees in the Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps in Jordan. Together they create murals that express "their longing to return to Syria, their dreams for the future, and their plight as refugee".⁶⁷

65 Arthelps 2017

66 Kunstmuseum Luzern 2012

67 Artolution 2017

In this case the community and the narrative aspect of the creation is in correspondence with my selection criteria, however the medium is not. In Martta Leskelä's Ragmate, female Syrian refugees create hand-knotted rugs with excess fabrics of the Turkish textile industry.⁶⁸ Here, the medium and the community coincide my selection criteria, but the narrative aspect is missing.

Before analysing the previously mentioned projects it is necessary to present an overview of the quality criteria that were established.

⁶⁸ Ragmate 2018

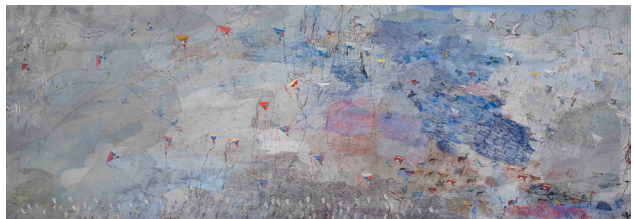
Purpose	- A project is founded with good intentions.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment is done by the facilitator of the collaboration or by people that are trusted by the community - Participation in the collaboration is voluntary - The relationship between collaborators is well-defined. - Special attention is given to trust-building. - A safe working space, preferably easy-to-reach, and materials are provided by the facilitator. - Activities are simple and have a logical task structure - Knowledge and resources are shared and pooled. - All collaborators have an equal value. - Flexibility: adjustments in structure and method are made where needed. - Adequate support: professional counsellors are consulted when needed. - Communication is made possible. Translators are involved when needed.
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All collaborators are represented in the created product. (Style, content, subject, realisation). - Authorship is shared and contributors receive credit.
Aftermath	- The benefit is mutual and rewards are shared.

Table I: overview of the quality criteria

Despite the undertaking of a complete qualitative analysis of each project, the analyses, presented in the next subchapters, only focus on the strongest and weakest aspects of the collaborations. This is due to the limitation in length of the thesis.



Top: Ill. 1 Ground, by
A. Kettle & refugees,
embroidery, 2018



Bottom: Ill. 2 Sky, by
A. Kettle & refugees,
embroidery, 2018

Thread Bearing Witness

“Thread Bearing Witness is an art project which uses textiles to learn from, show solidarity with, and raise funds for displaced people”.⁶⁹ Thread Bearing Witness (TBW) was developed by Alice Kettle, a contemporary UK-based textile artist and professor in Textile Arts at the MIRAD Manchester School of Arts at Manchester Metropolitan University, and her daughter, Tamsin Koumis, who has been working with migrants and refugees and co-founded the Dunkirk Legal Support Team.⁷⁰

TBW resulted in the creation of many artworks. This subchapter contains an analysis that focusses on the creation/realisation of two of the core pieces of TBW: Ground and Sky. Both are monumental embroideries that contain images contributed by war refugees. Kettle’s goal was to create works that raises awareness of the issue of immigration and, at the same time, depict an all-encompassing view of the world.⁷¹

“I am the person who is drawing together the story, but I am not telling it. I am creating a space for the story”, Kettle said.⁷² She sees herself as the translator, narrator and fabricator of the works. Therefore, all design decisions such as the representation of the contributed images, colour and composition were made by her. Also the stitching was solely done by Kettle. Her partners, the displaced people, were the content creators. Kettle mentioned that everyone had to fill in a consent form. It was very important to her that everyone knew what they were taking part in, what their role was and how their contributions would be represented.⁷³

Contributions for Ground and Sky were not only obtained through workshops with refugee organisations, but were also sent to her by individuals. Workshops were often organised with the help of refugee organisations. Kettle

69 Thread Bearing Witness
2018

70 Ibid.

71 A. Kettle (interview,
15 March 2019)

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

assured that trauma counsellors and translators were involved when needed and that participation remained voluntary at all times.⁷⁴

When asked about trust-building and fostering relationships Kettle acknowledged that establishing a trustful relationship is time consuming. Whenever possible she visited refugee communities once a week to get to know them before even telling them about her project.⁷⁵

One of the objectives of the works was to be inclusive. Due to the technical difficulty of certain images not all contributions could be represented in the work. However, Kettle was insistent about the fact that every person who participated had to be credited. She said that there is a collective authorship.⁷⁶

Furthermore, Kettle stressed that the TBW project aims to be mutually beneficial. She explained that she gained insight in the issues of forced displacement caused by conflict, a tremendous amount of understanding regarding these issues and many friendships. Her fellow collaborators have not gained anything so far. However, Kettle explained that if the pieces get sold, every single collaborator will receive a part of the sale. This reward will be handed out in the form of money or, for those who are not allowed to receive money, desired products, such as art supplies.⁷⁷

Keeping our quality criteria in mind, TBW occurs to meet all criteria. Therefore, it can be classified as a high-quality creative collaboration.

74 A. Kettle (interview, 15 March 2019).

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.



Top: Ill. 3 Drawing of
bird, unknown

Bottom: Ill. 4 Translation
of drawing, by A. Kettle,
embroidery, 2018

Ill. 5 We must leave home
(arpillera made during
workshop), anonymous,
embroidery, 2012



Common Threads Project

Common Threads is a non-profit organisation, founded by Rachel A. Cohen, a clinical psychologist, who has designed recovery projects in the developing world, trains local staff and implements interventions in post conflict areas.⁷⁸

The Common Threads project (CTP) is an intervention programme for female survivors of gender based violence (GBV), especially in the context of armed conflict.⁷⁹ The purpose of this programme is helping survivors of GBV heal from the imperishable psychological effects of such violence. Designing a narrative textile, inspired by South-American arpilleras, is one aspect of the psychotherapy and plays an important role in the healing process.⁸⁰

Cohen stresses that the story cloths are not designed to be shown. However, afterwards survivors might decide that they want to share their creation to have their voices heard and raise awareness about their situation. In order to protect the privacy of the collaborators, pieces are not credited when shown to the public.⁸¹

The CTP consists of a series of workshops where trained facilitators and survivors engage in psychotherapeutic activities that focus on healing trauma and building capacity. Developing a warm atmosphere of emotional safety and mutual support is one of the objectives of the CTP.⁸² Cohen confirms that this is ensured through engaging in team- and trust-building activities. She also pointed out that facilitators are recruited locally, since an important aspect of working with a community in a trauma therapy context is that the services need to be delivered by people from within the same community, culture and language.⁸³

78 Common Threads 2018

79 Cohen 2013: 157

80 R. A. Cohen (interview, 2 April 2019)

81 Ibid.

82 Cohen 2013: 161

83 R. A. Cohen (interview, 2 April 2019)

Facilitators not only provide therapeutic activities, but also teach basic sewing techniques and guide drawing exercises to encourage expression in a graphic form.⁸⁴ Since the design process is part of a healing process, it is important that the work comes from deep within each individual, each survivor.⁸⁵ For this reason facilitators do not directly take part in the design process. However, they do use the following phrases to influence the subject of the designs: “this is a moment I will never forget, this is something I cannot put into words, this is what I need you to know and this is what I hope for the future”.⁸⁶

Cohen stresses that participation in the CTP is mutually beneficial. It provides survivors with therapeutic benefits, such as learning skills to reduce stress, discovering the ability to process memories and move forward.⁸⁷ Additionally, they also gained confidence and, in some cases, built friendships.⁸⁸ Facilitators gained professional skills and confidence in working with survivors of GBV.⁸⁹

From the point of view of a creative collaboration the CTP does not redeem certain criteria, which are considered important, such as the representation of all partners and shared authorship. This is due to the fact that the CTP is primarily a mental health intervention, which includes a creative collaboration. Therefore, certain mental health principles take precedence over characteristics that define a creative collaboration. Thus, the CTP cannot be considered as a high-quality creative collaboration. Nonetheless, the project is mutually beneficial and excels regarding trust-building and providing adequate support for its war-affected participants due to the recruitment of trained, local facilitators.

84 Cohen 2013: 162

85 R. A. Cohen (interview, 2 April 2019)

86 Cohen 2013: 162

87 Ibid.: 164-166.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.: 166



Ill. 6 Husband drinking
while men are shooting
(arpillera made during
workshop), anonymous,
embroidery, 2012



TEXTILES THAT TELL A STORY

STOFFEN DIE EEN VERHAAL VERTELLEN

DES TISSUS QUI RACONTENT UNE HISTOIRE

Hi, my name is Isabeau. I'm studying textile design. I design fabrics that tell a story. I am looking for people that want to share the story of their life with me through the medium of drawing. Are you joining me for a drawing workshop?

Hoi, mijn naam is Isabeau. Ik studeer textielontwerp. Ik ontwerp stoffen die een verhaal vertellen. Ik ben op zoek naar mensen die hun levensverhaal met mij willen delen op een creatieve manier. Isabeau. J'étudie design textile. Je fais des tissus qui racontent une histoire. Je cherche des gens qui veulent partager leur histoire de vie avec moi dans une manière créative. Vous voulez dessiner avec moi?

When?
Monday 04/03/19 13:30-17:30
Tuesday 05/03/19 13:30-17:30

Where?
The homework classroom

Interested?
Sign up with Sabine

See you soon!

Wanneer?
Maandag 04/03/19 13:30-17:30
Dinsdag 05/03/19 13:30-17:30

Waar?
De huiswerkklas

Interesse?
Schrijf je snel in bij Sabine

Tot dan!

Quand?
Lundi 04/03/19 13:30-17:30
Mardi 05/03/19 13:30-17:30

Où?
La classe de devoir

Intéressé?
S'inscrire avec Sabine

À bientôt!

Top: Ill. 7 My fellow collaborators and me, Arendonk (BE), March 2019

Bottom: Ill. 8 Poster with information in three languages

Personal project

In this subchapter I will analyse my own bachelor project. I set up a creative collaboration with residents of the reception centre in Arendonk, Belgium. The goal of my project was to collaboratively design a story cloth. The purpose of this collaboration was raising awareness about the life of asylum seekers in Belgium.

In February 2019, I reached out to Fedasil Arendonk and pitched my idea to Sabine Van Dael, the activities director of the asylum centre. We discussed my idea and made arrangements about practical matters such as professional supervision, accommodation, activities, communication, time schedule etc. Sabine proposed to let social workers of the centre recruit people since they know the background of most of the residents and can thus estimate who might be interested to participate. In order to reach more people, I decided to change my target group. Instead of only recruiting war-affected people I welcomed all asylum seekers. I designed a poster and flyers that contained a short explanation of my project and practical information, such as the time, location and how to sign in. Due to the multicultural occupation of the centre, I decided to provide the information on the poster in three languages: Dutch, English and French. Since, according to Sabine, these are the most common secondary languages in the centre.⁹⁰

On 4 March 2019 I drove to the reception centre to execute the first part of my project, a drawing workshop with residents of the centre. In order to get to know my fellow collaborators and establish trust, I had decided to introduce myself and explain the purpose of my project to everyone individually. Another technique I used to gain trust was showing interest in them and their culture.

⁹⁰ Van Dael S. (Interview, 25 March 2019)

The following list invites you to get to know my partners too.⁹¹

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| - Ahmad - Beirut (W-A) | - Patrick - Ivory Coast (W-A) |
| - Diana - Ukraine (W-A) | - Viktor - Albania |
| - Seda - Armenia | - Willy - Burundi (W-A) |

Since all collaborators have different mother tongues, flexibility regarding communication was necessary. Luckily, all collaborators were able to communicate with each other using secondary languages, such as Dutch, English and French. Communication issues, caused by language barriers, were overcome by the help of the online translator apps, pictures, drawings and gestures. There were no professional translators involved. Often collaborators acted as translators for each other.

A series of simple drawing games and questions, such as, can you draw me a picture of your home?, can you draw me a picture of someone or something you miss?, what does your future home look like? allowed the asylum seekers to get inspired and create drawings.

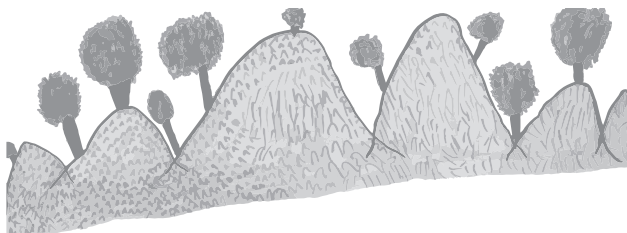
I acknowledge that asking such questions can create trauma, therefore two social workers, who have experience in working with asylum seekers, were involved in the workshops.

The relationship in my project was well-defined. I was the facilitator of the drawing workshop, who suggested topics for the drawings. The asylum seekers were the content creators. Later on I became a translator, who translated the content, created by my partners, into a cohesive design. It was important to me to stay true to the aesthetic of the asylum seekers as much as possible. Therefore, I decided to only make adjustments for practical reasons. I did not beautify any of the drawings.

91 W-A indicates that my partner was affected by war. To ensure the participants' safety and privacy we, my fellow collaborators and me, have decided to only use first names in terms of creditation.



Top: Ill. 9 My partners drawing their experiences, Arendonk (BE), March 2019



Middle: Ill. 10 Drawing of a landscape, by Willy, pencil & marker on paper, 2019

Bottom: Ill. 11 Translation of drawing, by me, Adobe Illustrator, 2019

The authorship of the final design [ill. 12] is shared. The design will be printed onto fabric, which will be transformed into cushions. One of the objectives of my project is to be mutually beneficial. Therefore, every partner will receive a cushion as a thank you gift.

My aim was to fulfil all the criteria. Unfortunately, I did not succeed. First, I had to adjust my target group in order to attract more participants. Thus, not all asylum seekers that participated had been affected by war. Then, due to the short timespan of the workshop I was unable to devote a sufficient amount of time to trust-building and develop a personal relationship. Luckily the presence of the social workers made it easier to interfere with the displaced people.

This collaboration was an extremely informative experience for me. It has improved my problem-solving skills. I discovered new ways to communicate. I have gained social skills, and, last but not least, it has changed my view regarding migration and forced displacement.



Ill. 12 Final design in
black and white, by me,
Adobe Illustrator and
Photoshop, 2019

Conclusion

The criteria established and presented in this thesis serve as a useful checklist to assess the quality of a creative collaboration with war-affected people. Furthermore, they can also be implemented as helpful guidelines for those undertaking a creative collaboration.

Based on the research that was undertaken in the course of this dissertation, it occurs that good communication and trust are vital to a high-quality collaboration. Unfortunately, language barriers and traumatic experiences in the past of a displaced person can hinder the establishment of these key characteristics. Therefore the inclusion of adequate support, such as social workers, mental health professionals and translators, is recommended as it has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on communication and trust-building.

Furthermore, the analysis of the cases has shown that it is not always possible to meet all criteria. The criteria regarding authorship and creditation seem to be difficult to fulfil. This can be due to the necessity to comply with other standards, such as mental health treatment principles or privacy grounds. When this is the case, further research can be undertaken to adapt the established quality criteria and define more suitable criteria that fit the core objectives of a project.

Overall, flexibility has to be considered as the crucial characteristic of both, a creative collaboration and its assessment.

Bibliography

Books

Aroche, J., & Coelo, J. M. (2004). Ethnocultural Considerations in the Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. In J. P. Wilson & B. Droždek (Eds.), *Broken Spirits: The Treatment of Traumatized Asylum Seekers, Refugees, War and Torture Victims* (pp. 53-80). New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Backer, T. E. (2003). *Evaluating community collaborations*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Bare, J. (2003). Commentary. In T. E. Backer (Ed.), *Evaluating community collaborations* (pp. 147-152). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Deacon, D. A., & Calvin, P. E. (2014). *War Imagery in Women's Textiles: An International Study of Weaving, Knitting, Sewing, Quilting, Rug Making and Other Fabric Arts*. Jefferson: McFaryland & Company Inc. Publishers.

Frieder, M. L. (2018). Stories from Palestine, Israel, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, India, France and Greece, with Survivors of Poverty and Ideological Violence, and those Living in Refugee Camps. In S. A. Jones (Ed.), *Art-making with refugees and survivors: creative and transformative responses to trauma after natural disasters, war and other crises* (pp. 147-210). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Jones, S. A. (2018). *Art-making with refugees and survivors: creative and transformative responses to trauma after natural disasters, war and other crises*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Lind, M. (2007). The collaborative turn. In J. Billing, M. Lind & L. Nilsson (Eds.), *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices* (pp. 15 - 31). London: Black Dog Publishing.

Mattessich, P. W., & Johnson (2018). *Collaboration: What Makes It Work* (3rd ed.). New York: Fieldstone Alliance.

Turkovic, T., Hovens, T. E., & Gregurek, R. (2004). Strengthening Psychological Health in War Victims and Refugees. In J. P. Wilson & B. Droždek (Eds.), *Broken Spirits: The Treatment of Traumatized Asylum Seekers, Refugees, War and Torture Victims* (pp. 221-242). New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Van der veer, G., & Van Waning, A. (2004). Creating a Safe Therapeutic Sanctuary. In J. P. Wilson & B. Droždek (Eds.), *Broken Spirits: The Treatment of Traumatized Asylum Seekers, Refugees, War and Torture Victims* (pp. 187-220). New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Wandersman, A. (2003) Foreword. In T. E. Backer (Ed.), *Evaluating community collaborations* (pp. xiii-xvii). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Wertheim-Cahen, T., Van Dijk, M., Schouten, K., Roozen, I., & Drozdek, B. (2004). About a Weeping Willow, a Phoenix Rising From Its Ashes, and Building a House ... Art Therapy With Refugees: Three Different Perspectives. In J. P. Wilson & B. Droždek (Eds.), *Broken Spirits: The Treatment of Traumatized Asylum Seekers, Refugees, War and Torture Victims* (pp. 419-442) . New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Online books & articles

Arts Law Centre of Australia (2017). *Arts Law information sheet: Artists in the Black Collaboration Toolkit - resources for use in Indigenous art projects*. Retrieved on 14 February, 2019, from <https://www.artslaw.com.au/info-sheets/info-sheet/artists-in-the-black-collaboration-toolkit-resources-for-use-in-indigenous/>

Barbour, K., Ratana, D., Waititi, C., & Walker, K. (2007). Researching collaborative artistic practice. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 13, 49-76. Retrieved on 24 February, 2019, from <https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v13i1.277>

Barnes, S. (2009). Drawing a line: A discussion of ethics in participatory arts with young refugees. In S. Barnes (Ed.), *Participatory Arts with Young Refugees* (pp. 34-40). Retrieved February 15, 2019, from https://www.ovalhouse.com/participation/publication/participatory_arts_with_young_refugees

Bishop, C. (2012). *Artificial hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Retrieved February 22, 2019, from <https://selforganizedseminar.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/bishop-claire-artificial-hells-participatory-art-and-politics-spectatorship.pdf>

Creative Victoria, VicHealth & Castanet. (2013). *Making Art with Communities: A Work Guide*. Retrieved 10 February, 2019, from https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/arts/5978-1_ARVI_Community_Partnerships_Workguide_72dpi_Complete.pdf?la=en&hash=39C079DA1F2362F4070AEEEF-CE1543F65073A13

Cohen, R. A. (2013). Common Threads: a recovery programme for survivors of gender based violence. *Intervention: Journal of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Conflict Affected Areas*, 11(2), 157-168. Retrieved 26 February, 2019, from https://www.interventionjournal.com/sites/default/files/Common_Threads___a_recovery_programme_for.4.pdf

Denov, M., & Shevell, M. C. (2019). Social work practice with war-affected children and families: the importance of family, culture, arts and participatory approaches. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 22(1), 1-16. Retrieved 7 April, 2019, from <https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2019.1546809>

Hogg, F. (2015). *An artist collaboration could make your brand more compelling*. Retrieved 16 March, 2019, from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/brand-x-artist-collaborations-finlay-hogg>

Lehrman, R. (2008). *Communicative Dynamics of Artistic Collaboration* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved on 12 March, 2019 from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/40040259.pdf>

Mazur, B. (2009). Participatory Arts with Young Refugees. In S. Barnes (Ed.), *Participatory Arts with Young Refugees* (pp. 9-12). Retrieved February 15, 2019, from https://www.ovalhouse.com/participation/publication/participatory_arts_with_young_refugees

Schöttle, A., Haghsheno, S., & Gehbauer, F. (2014). Defining Cooperation and Collaboration in the Context of Lean Construction. In B. T. Kalsaas, L. Koskela & T. A. Saurin (Eds.), *22nd Annual Conference of the International Group for Lean Construction* (pp. 1269-1280). Retrieved 14 Februari, 2019, from <https://iglcstorage.blob.core.windows.net/papers/attachment-1f57b84b-eaa0-4db2-b113-f0e5118e99bd.pdf>

Smagala, S. (2009). Drama as an Additional Language: Making changes: A case study. In S. Barnes (Ed.), *Participatory Arts with Young Refugees* (pp. 28-33). Retrieved February 15, 2019, from https://www.ovalhouse.com/participation/publication/participatory_arts_with_young_refugees

United Nations. (2018). *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019*. Retrieved 7 April, 2019 from <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/gho-2019-web-16012019-en.pdf>

Webpages

Arthelps (2017). Unhide. Retrieved 4 April, 2019, from <https://www.arthelps.de/projekte/unhide/>

Artolution (2017). Syrian Refugees: Artolution's Syrian Refugee Public Art Initiative. Retrieved 15 March, 2019, from <https://www.artolution.org/syrian-refugee-art>

Collaboration. (2019). In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved 4 March, 2019, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/collaboration>

Common Threads (2018). Our team. Retrieved 6 April, 2019, from <https://www.commonthreadsproject.net/our-team-1>

Kunstmuseum Luzern (2012). Kateřina Šedá. Talk to the Sky 'Cause the Ground Ain't Listening. Retrieved 15 March, 2019, from <https://www.kunstmuseumluzern.ch/en/exhibitions/katerina-seda-talk-to-the-sky-cause-the-ground-aint-listening/>

Ragmate (2018). The Story Of Ragmate. Retrieved 15 March, 2019, from <https://www.ragmate.com/the-story-of-ragmate/>

Thread Bearing Witness (2018). About. Retrieved 3 April, 2019, from <http://threadbearingwitness.com/about/>

Interviews

A. Kettle, co-founder of Thread Bearing Witness, 15 March 2019

J. Van Steenberghe, social worker in Fedasil Arendonk, 5 March 2019

R. A. Cohen, founder of Common Threads, 2 April 2019

Photo credits

III. 1 Thread Bearing Witness. Retrieved 3 April, 2019, from <http://threadbearingwitness.com/whitworth-gallery/>

III. 2 Thread Bearing Witness. Retrieved 3 April, 2019, from <http://threadbearingwitness.com/whitworth-gallery/>

III. 3 Thread Bearing Witness. Retrieved 3 April, 2019, from <http://threadbearingwitness.com/whitworth-gallery/>

III. 4 Thread Bearing Witness. Retrieved 3 April, 2019, from <http://threadbearingwitness.com/whitworth-gallery/>

III. 5 Common Threads. Retrieved 6 April, 2019, from <https://www.commonthreadsproject.net/ecuador>

III. 6 Common Threads. Retrieved 6 April, 2019, from <https://www.commonthreadsproject.net/ecuador>

III. 7 Photo taken by J. Van Steenberg

III. 8 Poster made by the author

III. 9 Photo taken by the author

III. 10 Drawing made by Willy

III. 11 Design made by the author

III. 12 Design made by the author

Lauterkeitserklärung

Diese Lauterkeitserklärung ist zusammen mit schriftlichen Leistungsnachweisen einzureichen, insbesondere zusammen mit der Seminararbeit und der schriftlichen Bachelor-Arbeit.

Ich erkläre, dass es sich bei dem eingereichten Text mit dem Titel

.....

.....

um eine von mir und ohne unerlaubte Beihilfe in eigenen Worten verfasste Arbeit handelt.

Ich bestätige, dass die Arbeit in keinem ihrer wesentlichen Bestandteile bereits anderweitig zur Erbringung von Studienleistungen eingereicht worden ist.

Sämtliche Bezugnahmen auf in der oben genannten Arbeit enthaltene Quellen sind deutlich als solche gekennzeichnet. Ich habe bei Übernahmen von Aussagen anderer Autorinnen und Autoren sowohl in wörtlich übernommenen Aussagen (= Zitate) als auch in anderen Wiedergaben (= Paraphrasen) stets die Urheberschaft nachgewiesen.

Ich nehme zur Kenntnis, dass Arbeiten, denen das Gegenteil nachweisbar ist – insbesondere, indem sie Textteile anderer Autoren ohne entsprechenden Nachweis enthalten – als Plagiate im Sinne der Aufnahme- und Prüfungsordnung der Hochschule Luzern (Art. 24) betrachtet und mit rechtlichen und disziplinarischen Konsequenzen geahndet werden können.

Name, Matrikelnummer:

Datum, Unterschrift:

