



Two 'sister quilts' have been created in Newcastle and Istanbul featuring symbols, words and shapes inspired by resistance against poverty, threats to women's safety and the rupturing of traditional gender roles.

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## Technology and traditional craft combine to highlight women's safety

An intercontinental project by a Northumbria University researcher is using traditional crafting techniques and the latest technology to explore the international issue of women's safety.

[Dr Angelika Strohmayer](#), Assistant Professor at Northumbria School of Design and Programme Leader for the BA (Hons) in Interaction Design, is collaborating on the initiative with Dr Özge Subasi, the director of [Futurewell](#)

[Research Group](#) at the Department of Media and Visual Arts at Istanbul's Koc University.

The partnership has resulted in the completion of two 'sister quilts' featuring symbols, words and shapes inspired by resistance against poverty, threats to women's safety, and the rupturing of traditional gender roles.

Funded by the [British Council's Crafting Futures Global Programme](#) 'Embroidering Protection' has included contributions from professional textile artists in Turkey, the public, in particular those working within or on topics related to women's safety, such as support workers, charity representatives, researchers, activists and people from the public sector.

Created collectively through live and online workshops held simultaneously in Turkey and on campus at Northumbria as part of the Istanbul Women of the World Festival, as well as other hybrid and in-person events, the quilts will remain in their respective cities, continuing to connect the individuals who came together to create them.

Dr Strohmayer explained: "We embraced technology to ensure this globally important topic could be explored multi-culturally, but beyond that, what makes this project so amazing to be part of is its legacy, as those involved continue to build on the relationships formed or strengthened on the day, as well as the information and resources shared to help women feel safer.

"In addition, these quilts, one of which will remain in Newcastle and the other in Istanbul, will also be digitally connected through Augmented Reality markers, virtually linking the stories stitched into them."

The project brought together diverse groups of women, some of whom connected to the event via an online video call, to collectively make a series of patchwork squares inspired by the topic over two hours. In Newcastle, discussions covered childhood and growing up, childcare, accessibility of cities for disabled people and cyclists, and systematic oppressions.

Meanwhile, side by side in Istanbul, patches were embroidered by individuals from a non-government organisation (NGO) supporting blind people, women cyclist activists, personnel from NGOs combatting migrant food poverty, and

others.

Dr Özge Subasi added: “These sister quilts exist to represent rupturing traditional roles, exploring how we may combat poverty and supporting solidarity among women in two cities that are thousands of miles apart.

“At the same time, the project helped us, the team, to rethink our positions in design. On top of the topics covered in the events, the informal help we received throughout the project to find the best quality and most innovative materials with fair production cycles, and the deep knowledge of local craftspeople about what to value as beauty and in crafting showed us important considerations in our development as justice-oriented designers.”

Sevra Davis, Director of Architecture Design and Fashion at the British Council said: “The British Council’s *Crafting Futures* programme aims to help bring about a sustainable future through collaboration, and to support a future for craft by understanding its value in our history, culture and contemporary world.

“The programme does this by bringing together craft practitioners, designers and organisations from around the world to explore possibilities for the future. We are proud to support the ‘Embroidering Protection’ project, which demonstrates how craft, collaboration, community and technology can come together to address one of today’s most pressing issues; women’s safety.”

Northumbria University is ranked fourth in the UK for its research power in art and design in the [Research Excellence Framework 2021](#). Discover more about ‘Embroidering Protection’ on the [project website](#) and visit [northumbria.ac.uk/design](http://northumbria.ac.uk/design) to read more about the design-led research taking place at Northumbria to help bring about real-world positive change.

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**Notes to Editors:**

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