



# Emma, the small giant



Old tradition reinvented: a giant step for participation and inclusion



Participatory  
governance of cultural  
heritage



**KORTRIJK**



77,000



## Challenge

The challenge was to revive the tradition of city giants through a contemporary and participatory method in a UNESCO creative city of design. Giants represent the spirit of the city and its people. Those from Kortrijk, a couple called 'Manten' and 'Kalle', were damaged and neglected in the 1990s.



## Solution

The idea of inventing new giants crossed an already started project from Bolwerk, a local private NGO focusing on creation, encounter, wonder and ecology.

The city and Bolwerk created the opportunity for citizens to invent, design and build new giants representing the diversity of the city while providing opportunities for the creative sector. The participatory imagination and innovative creation of new giants symbolises today's city: dynamic and innovative. They had to address equally all citizens, newcomers and people with a different cultural background.



## How ?

- 1** 1st phase (2015-2016): Collect people's ideas. Industrial design students showed designs, models and animations of a new giant at Kortrijk's town hall. Students in teacher training developed workshops for primary school pupils to connect them with giant heritage and collect ideas.
- 2** 2nd phase (2017 - 2018): refining concept and design. Bolwerk proposed a child for two existing giants, Mante and Kalle. Her name, Emma, meaning 'strong and huge', is the most popular girls' name in the region. Writers, musicians and artists wrote a story for Emma. Artists and creative entrepreneurs worked on sophisticated techniques for the new giant puppet. In 2018, Emma was registered as a citizen of Kortrijk during the annual city festival with a procession on the city's main market.
- 3** Now: Emma keeps bringing inhabitants closer. In a collective knitting campaign, 40 people knitted a 10-metre scarf during a 10-day marathon. Calls are ongoing to find volunteers to operate the giant.
- 4** In the future: A second giant will be created. Emma's friend will represent the city's ethnic diversity.

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## Budget/Financing

€ 123,055

The figure includes staff costs and volunteer students:

- 63.5% from the municipality
- 36.5% from Bolwerk (as a private investor)



## Management

- A clear choice was made for a participatory, decentralised approach.
- Staff from Bolwerk led the project based on a cooperative management system between the city administration and a constellation of private actors and citizens: educational, youth and cultural organisations (private and public sector), and representatives from sub-municipalities were involved.
- Bolwerk gathered a group of volunteers via an open call in the Kortrijk newspaper, local press, social media, and so on. This group is responsible for the maintenance, cleaning, storage and performance of the giant.



## Transferability

- Do not try to do everything by yourself. Analyse the challenges and look for the right partners, public, private and from civil society.
- Be humble and trust the knowledge, expertise and drive from actors in the creative and cultural industries.
- Approach cultural heritage in an innovative way: this helps promote social inclusion and shared ownership.



## Impact

- Increased interest in the heritage of giants among inhabitants.
- Increased participation of a diverse set of people from civil society: 29 graduate students from Howest-Ugent, 120 pupils from different schools, 40 children involved during summer holidays, three groups of giant-committees from districts of Kortrijk, 10 young people (18 – 30 year) involved in the management of Emma, 40 scarf knitters.
- Six individual actors/entrepreneurs from the creative sector involved in the production of Emma
- Four performances of Emma in Kortrijk, three performances outside in other cities.
- "Pretty, pretty lady! How they can do it? It seems complicated with the mechanics, six people, amazing!" - quote of a spectator.



## Links

[www.bolwerk.be/projecten/emma-de-kleine-reuzin](http://www.bolwerk.be/projecten/emma-de-kleine-reuzin)  
[www.kortrijk.be/reuzen](http://www.kortrijk.be/reuzen)  
[www.kortrijk.be/reuzenvankortrijk](http://www.kortrijk.be/reuzenvankortrijk)



## Contacts

Stijn Van Dierdonck,  
 Cultural Policy Coordinator at Kortrijk city council  
[stijn.vandierdonck@kortrijk.be](mailto:stijn.vandierdonck@kortrijk.be) tel:0032473862872

Ruben Benoit, Regisseur at Bolwerk  
[ruben@bolwerk.be](mailto:ruben@bolwerk.be) tel: 0032495783599

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