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Sign of the artisan city

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Abstract | In 2017 the City of Florence started to sketch out the application for UNESCO Creative City for the Craftsmanship, opening in 2019. The application was not selected by the Italian National Commission UNESCO.

However, the challenge made it possible to put at the center the physical city and citizens.

Contrary to what we thought in the past, the digitization of cities has increasingly turned out to be a not entirely democratic tool because it is often out of the control of its inhabitants. With the advent of the digital dimension, cities are constantly "measured" with different parameters to enter the rankings capable of expressing their qualities (technological equipment, quality of life...). Even this long path, in different aspects, began with a competitive spirit, gradually revealing elements of an extremely complex structure that led those who followed the candidacy to cross real data with the internal and external perception of the city. Often they did not correspond to the numbers of the smart city.

The project involved a large number of stakeholders who related in different ways than usual, managing to define the elements on which the projects were developed.

The experience, although not having had the desired result, was nevertheless able to highlight how consolidated but not clearly perceived values can be made to re-emerge and help design a new development model.

KEYWORDS | CRAFTSMANSHIP, IDENTITY, CREATIVITY, CITY, PARTECIPATION

1. Introduction

The expression creative city was first used by David Yencken in 1988 in the historic Australian literary magazine Meanjin, a name derived from aboriginal words. Yencken, professor of architecture and planning at the University of Melbourne, supports the importance for a city of not only being efficient and fair, but also promoting places for creativity and exciting experiences.

The theme is then taken up by Charles Landry, as regards economics by John Howkins, and by Richard Florida who elaborates the concept of creative class. With these studies we begin to consider creative activities, not restricted only to cultural artistic activities but more generally to who economize with their own ideas. If it is the people who make the difference, in a Human center vision, the city, understood in its most generic definition, must be able to encourage creative activities through suitable places and initiatives.

UNESCO in 2004, opens the calls for applications for creative cities by classifying them in seven categories: Music, Literature, Craft and Folk Art, Design, Media Arts, Gastronomy and Cinema.

Creativity is therefore associated with artistic activities with a space for technologies (albeit not primary) and no reference to science, referring to the fact that creative activities are traditionally connected with an artistic and technological innovation closely related to the concept of culture.

If on the one hand, therefore, the concept is circumscribed, on the other hand it is placed side by side with a model of sustainable development ensuring that there is no overlap with the cities that are world heritage sites; for these indeed, the purpose is «the protection and the transmission of future cultural and natural heritage» (https://en.unesco.org) while the network of creative cities promotes cooperation between cities «that have identified the creativity as a strategic element for sustainable urban development» (https://en.unesco.org). It is not therefore, a recognition of the goodness of local creativity but of how it is capable of triggering actions among at a sustainable development that can be connected, even if only in part, with the starting creative sector.

A way, therefore, of conceiving creativity and the cultural industry in a strategic sense, not only as a competence, and know-how.

2. The vision of the creative city

The research group headed by the Design Laboratory for Sustainability of the University of Florence, as a first action, tried to decline the theme of the creative city on the reality of Florence and, subsequently, identify which planning the path for the candidacy could have to contain.

The three T's identified by Florida - talent, technology, tolerance - turned out to be attractive and adapted to the urban reality we were working on, but the whole theoretical vision did not seem to help the path; in particular, it made us reflect the insistence on the concept of class. In short, we didn't want in any way to favor the transformation of creativity into merchandise and therefore Benjamin Barber's words sounded like a warning.

However, if it is the ruling class that chooses a place, uses it, consumes it, transforms its image according to its own needs, the disputing sense of the operation could have been

precisely that of bringing out the people and their works which, despite being important for the city are not class and are not dominant.

According to Benjamin Barber, however, «culture is 'built by consumption' as much as by production. Consequently, through the 'creativity of consumption', the homogenization of the dominant culture can be colonized and re-transformed into cultural peculiarities» (Barber p. 382).
How to do so that the creative culture is original, identity, not dominated by the culture of consumption.
Barber writes:

> "In fact, the restoration of a condition of healthy pluralism, where human values are manifold and the material consumption is only one in a cornucopia of human behavior, will require a social therapy that cures the civic schizophrenia that defines us, a civic therapy that restore the balance between private and public by giving our public civic Selves a renewed sovereignty over our private consumer Selves and placing the destiny of citizens before that of the markets. This implies a return of capitalism to its primary function as a productive and efficient system that addresses real economic needs not on the basis of supply (push) but demand (pull), and the restoration of democratic public life as a supreme system regulator of our worlds of life, of which the market is only one among many" (Barber 2007, p. 378).

By choosing to submit the application for Florence as a creative city for crafts and popular arts, the municipality intended, more or less implicitly, to attribute to the artisan reality the possibility of triggering virtuous projects with regard to sustainability in its forms - social, environmental cultural - and therefore to be able to re-propose an urban model where artisan production is a founding element, where creativity is a value and not a privilege, a tool to create better conditions for citizens and from a social point of view, environmental-cultural and economic.
But why is Florence a creative city? There are many different answers and not all of them can be expressed with the same clarity and determination. Among these certainly the fact that craftsmanship represents the meeting of different knowledge and disciplines, continuously contaminating itself with art, architecture, theater, literature[1].
Florence is a traditionally artisan city that founded this heritage starting from the Guilds of Arts and Crafts, on which the social and productive structure has settled, which, with their abolition of 1770, saw its powers transferred to the Chamber of Commerce, Arts and Manufactures (Gandi 1971). Today to the traditional processes are flanked the fab labs of the new makers, the new forms of social entrepreneurship that often combine traditional processes with tools for communication and digital manufacturing. The large and complex network of artisan businesses with a predominantly traditional approach operates on

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[1] We can think of the artisan workshops project of the choreographer Virgilio Sieni

different knowledge, techniques and materials that materialize in the various production sectors: leather, wood, precious metals, ceramics, weaving, hard stones, flakes and gilding, all having an important role in restoration techniques (Tofanari 2015).

Once identified the reasons that allowed to positively evaluate the presentation of the candidacy, it was necessary to answer what are the objectives to pursue through the candidacy, why is Florence applying? Among the main purposes there is to bring out and share what exists in the field of artisan creativity through a path that involves the major stakeholders of this sector: from artisans, from trade associations, to schools passing through administrations, event organizers, and foundations.

3. The reality-Florence

Florence has worked hard in recent years to increase its reputation as a contemporary city, managing to address some of the most pressing issues of medium and large cities. At the same time to enhance its historical-artistic identity more and more current.

Since 1982, the historic center within the walls has been registered in the World Heritage Site, one of the most prestigious and historically consolidated UNESCO awards.

It is among the cities with the longest life expectancy and good health and social care services (https://www. Osservatoriosullasalute.it/ Osservasalute/rapporto- Osservasalute-2016). It is firmly at the top of the European Union ranking as Cultural and creative cities in 2019 for medium-sized centers (https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/ JRC117336/citiesmonitor_2019.pdf)

It is the second smart city in Italy according to ICity Rank 2019 (https://www.ingenio-web.it/25527-le-prime-10-smart-city-di-italia-secondo-icity-rank-2019)

The Time magazine puts it in first place for the most loved city in Europe.

It is the fifth green city in the Legambiete ranking for 2020 (https://www.legambiente.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Ecosistema-Urbano-2020.pdf).

The complexity of the indicators of each of these categories is really high and the administrators know that each of these brings national and international visibility.

From a census carried out on the basis of the candidacy, it was possible to verify that there is a high concentration of shops and artisan workshops inside and outside the historic city and that these must face important problems in relation to the economic stability of companies. But these problems, for most of them, are not solved by becoming self-promoters through new communication channels, not by becoming masters for largely foreign apprentices. There is therefore a resistance to transformation, a perpetuation of traditions not only in the manufacturing processes but also in the mentality that changes very slowly: even in the meetings the artisans have affirmed the attachment to their work as a discipline of doing and the reluctance to want to transform themselves in communicators or masters. This almost hidden artisan practice, certainly not exhibited, had to emerge out of respect for the artisan mentality, and in some way flank the reality of Florence, a place of the Renaissance as it is told in an effective, albeit simplified, way in *The geography of genius* (Weiner 2017). How then to express the artisan identity of the real city?

At the time of the candidacy, Carrara, Fabriano were the only other Italian creative cities for the Craft and folk art sector. Definitely smaller cities and with simpler identities where it is

easy to combine the name of the city with one, and only one type of processing. In other areas we had Rome, Milan, Turin and Bologna which for many characteristics could be comparable to Florence. There is no doubt, however, that UNESCO's policy in recent years was to reward small towns to enhance their excellence within an international network and make them more recognizable and visible.

What visibility was Florence looking for? or rather what visibility did it need? If indeed Sheki or Baguito City they can express their artisan identity even with just an image but they are not known globally, for Florence the exact opposite was true.

Figure 1.   Tourists in Piazza San Giovanni

Furthermore, precisely in comparison with the rankings compiled by the various bodies and institutions, this recognition was able to express a more real and permanent character: how little does it take for a city to rise or fall within the livability ranking? how many extremely serious but unpredictable facts can shift positions? and again: can the work of an administration and the commitment of its population really be evaluated as such volatile parameters?

And how much does entry into these rankings depend on the management of data that is outsourced? and for this: how great is the desire not to give up power in exchange for necessary and strategic services?

It is also in this sense that the candidacy was carried out to affirm historical skills and realities but at the same time capable of great innovative potential with an authentic and non-transferable location.

Craftsmanship as a strategy to regain sovereignty over the place between the modernity of a technological matrix and a past of great importance.

4. The concept of Territorial Identity

The competition of a territory is increasingly played on two different levels but decidedly complementary: the global and the local one. The first allows companies a strategy extended to the world scenario in the search for services, suppliers as well as markets; the second commits companies to find in the local context those elements that allow them not to "homologate" their business with those carried out in other parts of the world, taking root in the territory and assuming an identity that cannot be replicated.

The two strategic dimensions are absolutely and necessarily complementary, so much from having favored the creation of the term "glocalism" (Senn, 2007)

The rapid progress of globalization has resulted in strong competition in every country, every city and every region that find themselves "fighting" to win their own share of consumers, tourists, investors, students, entrepreneurs, sporting and cultural events international media, and for the attention and respect of the international media, other governments and people of other countries (Anholt, 2006). The need to cultivate the roots in one's own territory of belonging has once again emerged strongly: tourism has favored communication investments in the micro-territorial dimension and has produced, with the creation of sporting, musical events, festivals, etc. who in this context are encouraged to review their communication strategies to try to go beyond the dynamics of internal community services, towards a narrative that favors the promotion of new attractions.

In the commercial field, the 'good name' of the brand is a precious asset for producers, an asset that allows the company to compete and win with the other millions of almost identical products on the market. Applying brand concepts to land management means understanding that each location needs to manage its own internal identity and external reputation. Every place on Earth has its own reputation, just like companies and products, which can be simple, articulate, predominantly positive or predominantly negative, and this reputation influences how people perceive a country, how they behave and they react with respect to what this produces: German engineering, French elegance, Japanese miniaturization, Italian style, Swedish design and Swiss precision are all values that are transferred to the products arriving from those countries even if the guaranteed qualities since made in are nowadays purely symbolic.

Figure 2.   leather craftsman at work

Simon Anholt, an expert in places and perception, argues in Places: Identity, Image and Reputation, that public opinion very often tends to be superficial and therefore to work by cliché, by stereotypes. The image that others perceive is often quickly transformed into what is defined as "reputation". And reputation is about identity and values. It is therefore necessary to start behaving and acting in order to be able to influence the way in which one is perceived, as Socrate argued stating that «The best way to earn a better reputation is to strive to be what you want to appear»

On the basis of Aaker (2001) and Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), place brands have been defined as representations of place identity, building a favorable internal (public, private and civil society stakeholders) and external (tourists, investors, traders, migrants) image ', leading to brand equity; that is, brand satisfaction and loyalty; name awareness; perceived quality; and other favorable brand associations (that is, positive image and reputation) attached to a name or symbol representing a country, city or region (Govers and Go, 2009, p. 17)

Places are definitely very complex "objects". Often the mistake is made of treating the city or region as a product since environments develop in places that allow products to be brought to international markets, to market tourism products, investment opportunities, cultural offers, job opportunities and offers of international study programs. But places are also spaces where people live, where they move, where they educate their children, enjoy their work and free time and think that the awareness and reputation of all this can be influenced by the use of a logo perhaps it is a bit simplistic.

Does all this mean that logos and slogans and identities are completely useless? No, of course. Logos and slogans play an important role in supporting a territory which, by proudly referring to its origin, will increase awareness and its communicative strength. However, if it is not only the symbol that builds reputation, it is certainly the symbol that can become an icon for an existing reputation built scrupulously over time and it is the identity of a territory that is able to create added value for global competitiveness by helping to activate a virtuous cycle of development.

This ideal path, thus, has been followed for the preparation of the application, trying to build an authentic reputation by working in full respect of our own identity and not by

building from scratch something that has nothing to do with our own nature, but remodeling the purpose that it has, on the basis of a better and more positive perspective[2].

The complex richness of the artisan culture and the lack of a solid reputation emerged from the major weaknesses: "Florence was able to apply for all categories". This sentence is pronounced by one of the stakeholders who took part in the participatory path, reinforces what has been previously expressed: a complexity that goes far beyond the artisan sector, a perception not decidedly oriented towards craftsmanship (Anholt 2007). The sentence reveals what, following the failure, can be called an optimism and an overconfidence that has made the status quo judge significantly positive so as not to have given importance to the need for changes to achieve the goal and not to I have had goads pointing to this (Thaler 4014).
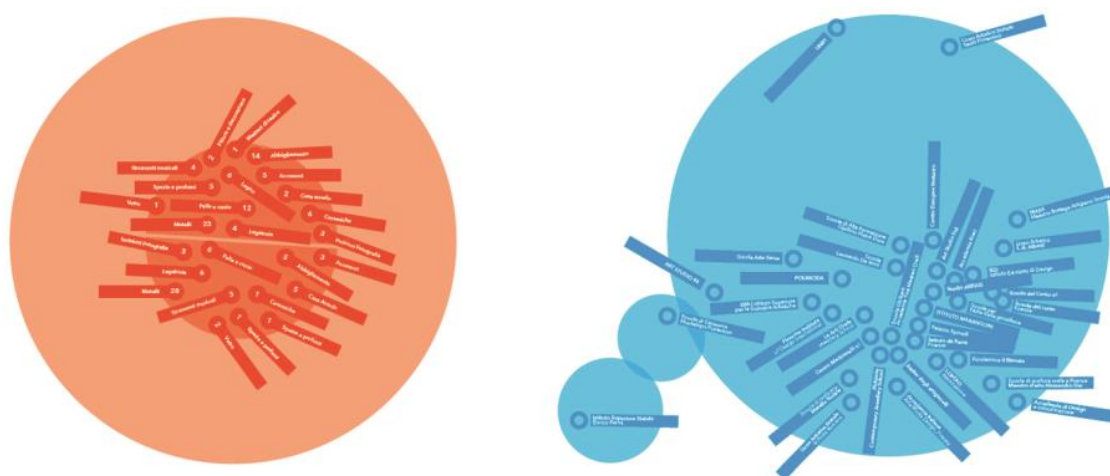

Figure 3.   Density of artisans and creative schools in the city

5. Perception and Partecipation

There are various 'image formation agents' (Gartner, 1993) that influence the way people understand the world. The most important agents that form perceptions in people's minds are, of course, their own experiences (also called organic agents), followed by word of mouth about the experiences of colleagues, friends, relatives or otherwise connected contacts (called social agents).

We must never forget those who live in the places and their active role in the territorial management process: a good brand strategy should be built on the basis of the sense of belonging and shared objectives, factors that generate a link that is difficult to reproduce or imitate.

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[2] It is worth mentioning the thesis of Eliana Dedda, Logo place. Territorial brand and procedural evolution in the visual translation of complex identities, Master's thesis of the Polytechnic of Milan, School of Communication Design, year 2013-2014, supervisor Francesco Ermanno Guida.

The entities and institutions that work on crafts in Florence are many; just as there are fairs at national and international level. An articulated and complex fabric both from an institutional and product point of view. An artisan area was not chosen but artisan knowledge as a whole. If Carrara is a city of marble, if Fabriano is a city of paper, Florence is the city of goldsmiths, leather, straw, carvers and gilders, stone, ceramics, and fashion and the choice could not fall on a sector only by virtue of the calculation of the higher turnover.

Therefore, choosing to nominate Florence not for an artisan sector but for all the artisans as a whole, was a choice that certainly didn't facilitate communication with the evaluators but, precisely by virtue of the authenticity of the message sought, it appeared essential.

Distinguishing what was and wasn't perceived, what is the reality, occupied the first part of the time of the path; the second part concerned the definition of the vision and the mission of all the work.

Re-starting from the net, knowing and sharing the existing was the first important goal.

The role of the stakeholders is to be considered fundamental in all participatory processes. Following the classification proposed by Rossella Sobrero, the stakeholders were placed in a map that was able to summarize those involved in craft activities with different roles (Sobrero 2018).

Operational stakeholders are identified with the craftsmen; institutional ones with representatives of administrations, the key stakeholders represented by trade associations, organizers of events dedicated for the part of the training chain, the foundations, and with marginal stakeholders part of the training chain not included among the key stakeholders[3].

At least the 'operational' and the 'keys' have been seen to belong to the community of interest and purpose (Manzini 2018).

The key stakeholders have filled a form to collect information about their skills, the inclusion of their structures in national and international projects, the initiatives they promoted and in which they took part, the suitable spaces they had for activities to be played.

Just from the reading of the documents and from some meetings with the artisans, a composite panorama emerged, consisting of small companies able to make important sales, which, above all, acted as custodians of a material culture of inestimable value, understandable only through the immersion in the environments and hardly returnable through simplified narrations. From what was considered a first census, the strategic role of creativity emerged.

"Knowledge and culture are nodes of networks that feed a new tertiary social composition on the territories, widespread in the productive activities in the craft sector, involving the high education present on the area" (Bonomi 2014 p. 36).

One of the peculiarities of Florence, that has been highlighted, is that of having on its territory a very high number of schools dedicated to creative training (only 40 universities are American). Design students from the University of Florence, ISIA, Academy of Fine Arts and IED were involved in the final stage of preparing the application to give shape to the project proposals.

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[3] Rossella Sobrero divides the stakeholders into four groups: marginal, institutional, key, operational. Although the text refers to business contexts, however, the division between the stakeholders seemed to be able to be transferred to the reality described.

6. Project for the candidacy

Joining the network of creative cities has no economic recognition, and membership in the network is subject to periodic checks which could also lead to the exit of members. It is an important commitment that involves the implementation of three local projects and three aimed at the international network. If the former mainly expressed, they were the first to express the wishes of the world of craftsmanship which saw a great opportunity to carry out even ambitious projects, with the second it was the whole city that put itself on the line that it shared with the other members of the international network what original contributions Florence could offer.

Among the requests of the call was to develop the application through a participatory process. The number of stakeholders involved was different, however it would be incorrect to say that a bottom up formula was applied: it was a formula that brought together some elements not only with interests but also with great planning but it was not a path that it started from the bottom and this is partly due to the structure of the UNESCO demand.

The candidacy, in fact, which must be presented by the mayor, was followed by the Councilor for productive activities who instructed the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence to structure it. Another point of reference was the Municipality Office dedicated to UNESCO World Heritage Site.

About 100 people representing administrations, trade associations, associations, artisan businesses, hubs and makers. The method adopted in these two meetings is inspired by Open Space Technology (OST - Open Space Technique), a tool that, thanks to an atmosphere of informal relationships and a solid structure of the works, maximizes the active contribution of the people who participate. Eight topics for discussion were discussed during the days[4] from which the traces of the six projects emerged to which the students of the creative schools, as mentioned, gave shape.

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[4] - The places of craftsmanship
What are the most significant places of Florentine craftsmanship? What are the places that, although less visible or known, have a potential to express?
- The actors to be involved
Which actors or categories of actors could it be strategic to involve in local and international actions? What strategies to adopt for the involvement of the actors?
- Telling the past, acting on the present,
design the future
How to foster a narrative that intertwines the past, present and future of craftsmanship in Florence? How to relate the future with the artisan tradition of Florence? What are the most interesting strategies and cases?
- Relationships between different practices and knowledge
How has interdisciplinarity been and can it be an added value for Florence?
How can this added value emerge? What are the most interesting experiences?
- Awareness of the value of heritage
cultural artisan and popular art
How to create greater awareness in Florentines of the value of cultural heritage linked to crafts and popular art? What are the most interesting strategies?
How to communicate this value also to those who do not belong to the local community?
- Feeling part of a city of craftsmanship

The decision to conclude the course with the contribution of the students was chosen for two reasons: the first was to represent the Italian and foreign students who are part of the urban community of the city and who characterize it, the second was to have a feedback with the young generation on the work done and possibly be able to change direction.

Just as the artisans focused on the local dimension, the students gave international breath to the proposals by reiterating that citizenship is not by birth and that, at least in ambitions, it is a concept that has at least extended to Europe.

The six project themes that were proposed to the commission were the following:

- Mapping - Census and digital mapping of all the realities related to the world of craftsmanship in the metropolitan area - creative ecosystem.
The result had to be that of creating a digital and "physical" map of the artisan ecosystem. The map is continuously updatable and digitally updated and where every stakeholder involved can add documents and information to contribute to the construction of a shared narrative of the metropolitan city. The goal has been pursued and today there is an active network where artisans of the old and new professions can voluntarily register and have a space available.

- Strengths of networking - bring out the creative ecosystem and event creation capable of representing it.
Although Florence has been home to an international craft exhibition for more than eighty years, it was considered by many stakeholders that it is a formula that is no longer capable of satisfying the visibility and attention sought by artisans on its own. The proposals went from the Fuori Mostra to a physical place where to exhibit in conjunction with the city's attraction events. This was the hypothesis that prevailed and the creation of a pole that also achieves the objective of the second point is the path that the administration is following.

- Safeguarding Inheritance and building the future - the construction of a digital and material archive to collect all the corporate assets and put them in part for free consultation. This project, which from a physical point of view was linked to the previous one, among the three, was the most demanding for two reasons where the first was of an economic nature for the preparation for physical archive locations, the second, even more important that he saw the artisans willing to share not only with the competitor but with the world part of their identifying elements and in many ways unique.

How to foster a closer relationship between craftsmanship and population? What are the most effective tools and strategies to spread the identity of the artisan city among the population?
How can craftsmanship be a vehicle for promoting new lifestyles, which make it closer to people's daily lives?
- Tradition and innovation in production
What elements related to innovation can be strategic in the elaboration of local and international actions?
How can the preservation and respect for the tradition of production processes be reconciled with technological innovation?

On international projects, the start was to highlight the many relationships that bind Florence to international networks of municipalities, from twinning to the most recent networks.

- Competitive Identity and Know How Alliance - starting from the competitive identity, the objective was the overlapping and integration of the UNESCO creative cities network with the existing networks to which the city of Florence adheres: twin cities linked by friendship pacts, the network of UNESCO World Heritage sites, the Unity in diversity network. The materialization of these bonds was given by objects that were built passing from one city to another until it was completed.

- "Creativity" in-residence - Combination and exchange between artisan enterprises of the network I unite with the aim of innovating and contaminating the different shop models. The Erasmus of craftsmen has been defined where the Erasmus model recognizes the ability to unite and increase the ability to understand others. Here too, on the model of residences for artists, dedicated in particular to performers, the administration is equipping spaces for artisans.

- Sustainability contest - Creation of a competition between the schools of the creative cities on crafts as a model of sustainability that generates a digital exhibition and a traveling exhibition between the participating cities. The competition is a way to promote a production model but also a socio-cultural and environmental one.

Projects therefore feasible so much so that the city, even though it has not entered the network, is implementing them; differently ambitious projects but above all projects that have tried to respond to the needs and desires of those who study, produce and work in the creative field of craftsmanship.
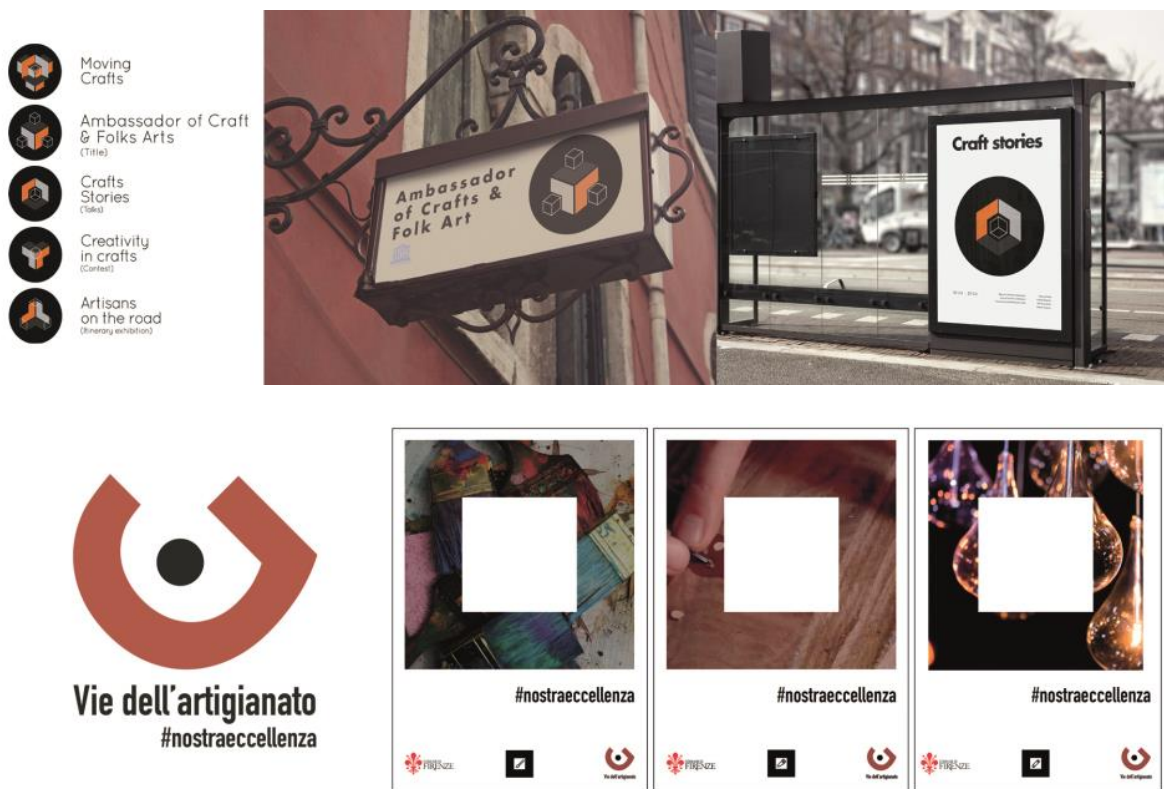
Figure 4.   Some concepts of the creative students of the final workshop

5. Conclusion

The candidacy for creative city cannot be said to have been a useless experience in the first place because the city is working in the right direction.

But we must reiterate that perhaps the deepest reason that allowed it was the search for an identity that was independent of both the assessments of technological networks and the reputation of a Renaissance city and, consequently, a city with a significantly linked economy. to tourism.

Logos and slogans can help raise public awareness, but identity is not just something to put in the corner of the advertising page or on business cards: only if local businesses, cultural organizations, tourism businesses and individuals, they will constantly engage in referring to the territory with pride, raise awareness, and can impact reputation.

From here and from the desire to tell not only the material but also and above all the immaterial, virtual storytelling paths will develop that will find fertile ground in digital applications that combine storytelling and information, tradition and technology.

So, strategy and substance first, then the rest.

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