

Craft enterprises to foster generative local communities.

An analysis of the Venice case study

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Abstract

The critical factors for achieving long-term success in urban and cultural regeneration include the active involvement and integration of the local community at all levels.

Craft enterprises can play a crucial role in transmitting culture and knowledge and in creating significant opportunities and positive externalities for the local community and the territorial ecosystem, from an economic, cultural and social perspective.

With the right strategies craft enterprises can be deployed as models fostering social cohesion and social inclusion within a community.

A literature review is presented to introduce the topic by positioning culture-based regeneration projects as initiatives to promote, storytell and enact territorial cultural heritage, know-how and work practices. Craft business can play a pivotal role in such cases. Three case studies of craft businesses in the historic centre of Venice were analysed to make explicit the link between craftsmanship, territorial economic development and social cohesion in a touristic destination as Venice. The aim was to show three living examples of how the cultural aspect can be part of craft enterprises' strategies and to what level it can shape and influence the participation and activation of the local community and enhance the tourist experience.

Text

0. Introduction

The critical factors for achieving long-term success in urban and cultural regeneration include the active involvement and integration of the local community at all levels. We argue that craft enterprises can have a crucial role in transmitting culture and knowledge and in creating significant opportunities and positive externalities for the local community and the territorial ecosystem.

Benefits and opportunities can be categorised in three main fields:
1) Economic-driven. Craft creates economic benefits and opportunities by creating labour opportunities for the middle class, by increasing the competitiveness of complex international value chains, by creating new products and/or service for inhabitants and visitors. These organisations are home to traditional practices, skills, and abilities of

local people, thus safeguarding an exceptional repository of skills and knowledge that has proven highly effective in supporting specific sectors such as luxury and experiential tourism (Micelli, 2011; Bettiol & Micelli, 2014). II) Culturally driven. Craft enterprises encapsulate and transmit knowledge and know-how that pertains to the tradition developed over the years in a specific vocational area. The benefits that these entities can give to the community entail, among others: the transmission of heritage, historical and culturally relevant knowledge; the contribution to the culturalization of the local population; the dissemination of new practices, products or services and technologies in the territory. III) Socially driven. Craft enterprises can promote the creation of spaces accessible to the community. Establishing a development model that focuses on the improvement of culture promotes social rejuvenation within the territory. This initiative cultivates a sense of belonging among individuals, enhances social capital, alters the perspective of the location, and elevates the level of education (Sepe, M., & Di Trapani, G., 2010). In addition, the engagement of arts and crafts organisations contribute, at the social level, to the preservation of the distinctiveness and exclusivity of the heritage and culture of the specific geographical area in which they are situated (Manfredi Latilla et al., 2019).

Our review emphasises the essential role of craft enterprises as models in social cohesion and social inclusion. Our key findings shed light on existing literature, providing an overview of the current state of the art. Results of this paper can be used by the academic community, policy-makers and practitioners to support the development of both craft enterprises strategies and culture-based regeneration processes. Three case studies of businesses in the historic centre of Venice were analysed to make explicit the link between craftsmanship, territorial economic development and social cohesion with the purpose of showing three living examples of how the cultural aspect can be part of craft enterprises' strategies and to what level it can shape and influence the participation and activation of the local community and enhance the tourist experience.

1. Promoting generative local communities

Literature has a liquid notion of local communities as a dynamic interconnection between identity, place and space (Smith & Robinson, 2006). Communities represent a group of individuals who permanently or temporarily reside in a specific location or territory, united in their shared commitment to fostering inclusivity, support, and the promotion of social cohesion. Communities have a crucial role in the cultural and social transformation that arises from initiatives focused on the regeneration of culture, especially as proposed by the theories of community participation in cultural tourism and development (Smith & Robinson, 2006; Murphy, 2013; D'Amore, 1983).

Extensive literature has investigated the role played by community-based initiatives in fostering social cohesion and reshaping power dynamics in communities (Ostanel, 2017; Ardill & Lemes de Oliveira, 2018). Scholars have posited that community-based initiatives possess the potential to foster the advancement of innovative multilevel governance in the context of urban rehabilitation and territorial development.

The active engagement of community members plays a crucial role in ensuring the long-term viability of cultural heritage management and urban development initiatives (Li et al., 2020). The study by Walther et al. (2022) showed how the establishment of local private initiatives has the potential to foster the development of stronger

communities. Conversely, the presence of robust communities may also contribute to the growth and success of private initiatives. This symbiotic interaction between the two entities can lead to reciprocal transformation and advancement.

The enhancement of urban regeneration is contingent upon the encouragement of active citizenship among those residents who possess the capacity to mobilise local resources. According to Ostanel (2017) urban regeneration is a long term effort that necessitates a strong connection to the unique character and spirit of a location. It should prioritise the social and cultural aspects of the community, sometimes referred to as the urban “software”, rather than solely focusing on the physical infrastructure, known as the urban “hardware”. Within this theoretical framework, community-based initiatives, motivated by a novel social approach, have the capacity to significantly contribute to the process of urban regeneration. These initiatives can be viewed as catalysts, effectively facilitating the connection between various stakeholders, and therefore serving as a driving force behind innovative practices.

From this perspective, generativity can be conceptualised as a qualifying attribute of a community, capable of fostering business innovation while supporting the consolidation of existing ties and the emergence of new relationships within a specific community. Culture plays a pivotal role in innovation endeavours. The cultural characteristics of a community are essential in defining and supporting processes of economic and social growth by helping to develop the generative dimension of a territory.

2. Culture-based regeneration

Culturally-based regeneration involves interventions that focus on revitalising both the infrastructural and non-infrastructural elements of urban environments. These interventions rely on innovative processes within the cultural, creative, and social domains, with the aim of transforming and repurposing neglected or deteriorated urban spaces, abandoned buildings, and neglected green areas. The ultimate goal is to reintegrate these spaces into the fabric of the city, making them habitable, functional, and accessible once again.

Culturally-based regeneration pertains to the facilitation of community development and the augmentation of pre-existing cultural elements. The concept entails the activation and enhancement of existing resources within a given region, which are frequently inactive or underutilised. This approach aims to stimulate novel socio-cultural dynamics and initiate processes of revitalization that have a positive impact on the well-being of individuals, extending beyond the realm of local economies.

The incorporation of cultural elements into regeneration programmes yields beneficial externalities for the given territorial area. Regenerated hybrid cultural centres embody a network of physical spaces that facilitate close interactions, enabling the exploration of novel cultural practices, the creation of sustainable social well-being, the development of imaginative concepts, and active engagement in the preservation and evolution of a dynamic cultural legacy. In contemporary times, these establishments serve as significant platforms for the promotion of culture, art, and the dissemination

of knowledge. They transcend mere amusement, commercialization of services, or voluntary efforts, instead functioning as catalysts for societal development and transformation. These spaces represent alternate avenues for the production of a solidarity economy. They are collaborative platforms that contribute to the development of a generative welfare system. These platforms introduce novel models of governance, management, business, and entrepreneurship. These places serve as platforms where culture functions as a means to repair social connections and foster a diverse and inclusive exchange between artists and communities. These entities can be regarded as novel cultural establishments in close proximity.

In many instances, cultural creation has served as both the driving force and the cohesive element behind certain re-appropriation practices within society (Cancellieri et al., 2014). If, on one hand it is imperative to consider the relevance of urban policies in urban environments, on the other hand it is crucial to acknowledge the potential of cultural practices to serve as regenerative forces for the revitalization of such territories. This happens when the cultural creation is deeply connected to the dynamic essence of the urban environment, achieved via the examination of the societal customs and behaviours that are regularly observed in particular locations.

To avoid reducing places to “platforms for commercial display” it is imperative to transcend top-down branding (that carries as drawbacks the disregard of the unique characteristics, sensitivities, social dynamics, and imaginative qualities that define these places) and instead advocate for the accessing of social and urban significance accumulated over time inside a given community. By doing so, it is possible to construct city images that are rooted in grassroots perspectives and experiences.

3. The emergence of placemakers in promoting territorial culture based innovation

A stream of academic interest has aroused in the last decades around the topic of urban, territorial, social (Figueiredo et al., 2022) and culture-led regeneration processes (Cerreta & La Rocca, 2021; Yu & Kwon, 2011), sense-making and place-making (Miles & Paddison, 2005; Palermo & Ponzini, 2014; Thomas, 2016; Ellery & Ellery, 2019). Such processes have the potential to: a) encourage the involvement of local communities aimed at improving the quality of social, cultural and economic dynamics in the territories of reference; b) experiment and disseminate innovative and inclusive methodologies capable of developing a sense of identity and belonging to places; c) implement the production of new works, performances and live shows, capable of activating and enhancing the project places; d) support paths of artistic, cultural and social innovation and transformation and research and production in the field of contemporary creativity. Craft can play a significant role as a solid foundation for placemaking initiatives (Richards, 2021). Such initiatives are characterised by an increased involvement of locals and visitors, with a strengthened relationship.

Thanks to the establishment of networks and alliances, creating relations with a plurality of stakeholders and policy makers, it is possible to lay the foundations for a new way of experiencing and developing places intended not only as infrastructure (material component), but also as a social and cultural space of proximity (immaterial component). In addition to the physical component of the place, there is therefore the

intangible component in the promotion of social and cultural initiatives with the people who make places come alive (Kutay Karacor, 2014).

Placemakers can be characterised as those who engage in urban innovation by actively participating in the transformation of city spaces. They critically reassess the connection between urban environments and nature, contribute to the improvement of mobility systems, and undertake the redesign of residential and commercial structures, as well as public places such as squares and streets. Hybrid professionals that possess the ability to harmonise many requirements with imaginative thinking, blending everyday creativity with the well-being of the urban community. The role of the placemaker encompasses various professionals, including architects, designers, aldermen, and associations. The individual in question possesses the capacity for creativity and demonstrates adeptness in effectively mobilising both resources and individuals in order to transform their ideas into tangible outcomes (Granata, 2017).

Placemakers possess diverse educational backgrounds, encompassing disciplines such as social sciences, communication, architecture, urban planning, design, and economics, which contribute to their skill set. These profiles share a common characteristic in that they have pursued non-linear and experiential trajectories across several environments. Individuals deviate from established job trajectories.

The placemaker employs a multidisciplinary methodology, incorporating both specialised technical expertise and broad strategic acumen, as well as effective management abilities. Additionally, they embrace a creative mindset in their approach. These individuals possess the capacity to initiate and facilitate change by bridging the gap between a region's vision and expectations, taking into account the specific local circumstances, project objectives, and strategic considerations. Their role involves harmonising the many needs originating from both the local and national levels.

The placemaker must possess a range of skills that facilitate the handling and administration of various facets of territorial transformation. These skills encompass activities such as planning and governance, community engagement, establishing partnerships and strategic networks, promoting initiatives, organising events, securing funding, and participating in national and European funding programmes. Primarily, it is important to possess a profound dedication and fervour towards the revitalization of localities and societies. The aforementioned vision encompasses the imperative to actively foster the well-being of society, ensure the longevity of our environment, and cultivate equitable economic development within the regions we currently occupy and will occupy in the future. The work of placemakers can be described as encompassing a transdisciplinary approach, involving active participation and involvement at multiple levels (Granata, 2017). These three factors indicate a basic aspect: placemakers do not operate in isolation. The active exchange of ideas and perspectives among professionals, persons, organisations, and public entities with diverse origins constitutes a fundamental element of hybrid professions.

4. The contribution of craft enterprises

The interconnection between the cultural and creative industries and craft has grown stronger, with craft playing a significant role also in the advancement of creative tourism experiences (Richards, 2021).

The value of craft-based activities has demonstrated its weight in a variety of sectors from fashion to furniture, from yacht building to agribusiness. In productions that have targeted sophisticated and demanding segments, the ability to rely on craft-based skills rooted in specific territories has given firms and supply chains the opportunity to develop a long lasting competitive advantage. Since the 2008 financial crisis, mass media communication and a significant cultural production activity (e.g. the major event Homo Faber held in Venice in 2018 and 2021) have created a strong link between the quality of craftsmanship and the unique value of products, services and experiences (Micelli, 2014).

The role of craft businesses has also proven to be particularly important in tourism promotion. A growing share of travellers demand authentic tourism experiences, and visits to high craft-related manufacturing businesses are one such opportunity. The growing focus on visits to these types of spaces and on meeting the players in high craftsmanship has prompted platforms such as AirBnB to promote a dedicated offer within their portals.

The rediscovery of artisan work and the economic contribution of craft-based enterprises has prompted a renewed reflection on the role of artisan enterprises in their territory. Craft-based enterprises play an important role for several reasons. According to an established literature, the role that craft enterprises undertake within the local community, with particular attention given to those situate in destinations of tourist interest is that of:

- Aggregator of community: creating space for local community (utilise parts of the spaces of the enterprise, its facilities or accessing to products or services, engage with other members of the community, experience culturally and socially relevant activities). These actions relate to “culture-led regeneration” processes often participated by institutional and public fundings entailing the establishment of physical areas that facilitate various activities to stimulate local cultural and economic development. In such instances the concept entails the integration of many elements of cultural production inside a single space, emphasising the coexistence of incubation, production, and fruition to foster hybridization and the convergence of education, creativity, events, entrepreneurship, food, and leisure (Lusiani & Panozzo, 2016).
- Cultural transmitter: transmitting a local and traditional know-how that can be reflected in artefacts, experiences and cultural objects and experiences. This can take up a “museification” approach as reported by Lusiani & Panozzo (2016) according to which the establishment of an enterprise museum is made mainly for celebrative purposes, as testimony of the material and immaterial culture related to the history of the site. Or it can create a deeper relationship with the local culture by engaging in activities and actions that engage a multiplicity of stakeholders in learning such immaterial practices.
- Cultural mediator: creating events and activities that engage local communities in the participation of events, bringing hosts from different backgrounds and territories.
- As regards tourism, craft-based firms offer authentic activities and experiences for incoming travellers in order to disseminate local culture, traditions and heritage.

In this sense, craft enterprises have a crucial role in representing local culture,

since craft artefacts embed local material, culture and place, being directly linked to local people's life (Richards, 2000). The craft experience is valuable because it is individual, customised and unique (Pralhad et. al, 2004). Unlike many cultural tourism experiences, creative tourism also involves more direct relationships between the tourists and people in the place they are visiting, and the culture, creativity and genius loci of the place itself.

The economic and social impact of craft-based businesses varies considerably depending on the ability of local entrepreneurs to refer to technology and design. Regarding technology, over the past decade a number of tools related to digital manufacturing have experienced rapid diffusion due to increasingly lower costs and an ease of use that has made their adoption more accessible (Bettiol et al, 2020). A considerable amount of research has highlighted how the use of new technologies within small businesses has promoted growth and significant increases in margins.

Regarding the connection between craft and design, a growing number of designers traditionally oriented toward industry and large-scale production have begun to develop collaborations with artisans and small businesses with the aim of producing one-of-a-kind objects or small series. The alliance between designers and small manufacturers has received increasing attention from the market, also because of the growing relevance of dedicated online sales channels.

5. Positioning craft enterprises in tourism destinations

Cultural creation and utilisation serve the purpose of producing and propagating innovative processes. Additionally, this utilisation offers resources for the enhancement of individual prospects through the establishment of a framework for socially sustainable progress. Firms have the potential to play a significant cultural role, which extends beyond the local community and include a great variety of subjects including the visitors in tourist destinations. The investigation of cultural factors holds significant importance for tourists when they are making decisions regarding their choice of destination (Douglas et al., 2001).

Craft enterprises which leverage on cultural heritage, culture-based tourism (for the sale of artisanal products and culture-related experiences) are capable of creating authentic experiences that foster good tourism practices, attracting responsible visitors and contributing to contrasting mass tourism, thus generating positive effects on the local territory and economy. Indeed, the incorporation of local cultural features, such as cultural heritage and place identity, enhances the integration of urban regeneration initiatives within the local community and increases their appeal to both residents and cultural tourists (Evans, 2005; Unesco, 2006).

The challenge for the territories and destinations is to offer a variety of cultural amenities, encompassing a wide range of activities, that cater to the desires of both local inhabitants and tourists, as outlined by Sepe (2010). According to Richards (2005) the concept of creative tourism was established in research in the mid-1990s, when practitioners sought to explore strategies for augmenting the marketability of craft products to visitors. Tourists may be less inclined to pay a higher price for handcrafted products unless they possess an appreciation for the craftsmanship and expertise involved in their creation and get a deeper understanding of the cultural and traditional values encapsulated in the practice developed by local artisans. The "experience economy" proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) places emphasis on the relevance of staging an experience in the consumption of products.

Several studies have since then assessed that a significant number of visitors show interest in observing the process of crafting products and acquiring craft-related skills (Richards 2021). At the same time craft enterprises propose immersive experiences that facilitate visitor engagement with the craft manufacturing process, either through observation of craft producers in action or through instruction in specific production processes. The application of craft strictly connected to a place helps to build a sense of place and is a valuable tool to contrast globalisation and the downsizes of mass tourism. Contributing to this aim is also a greater involvement of tourists with craft and local culture, as a means to build a stronger relationship and connection with the destination. These actions contribute to the definition of “creative tourism”, as a tourism offering visitors the opportunity to engage in active participation in learning experiences (Richards & Raymond, 2000).

Unesco (2006) defines it as a “travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture”.

Such learning and creative experiences, as proposed by Pine & Gilmore (2013) have the power of increasing the perceived value of the artefact itself, giving it greater differentiation with respect to mass produced products by adding a relational dimension, encapsulated in the connection between maker and consumer.

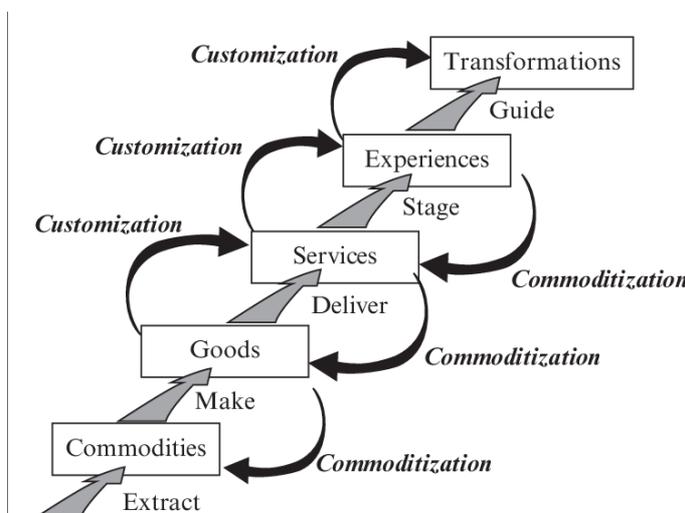


Image: The Progression of Economic Value, Pine & Gilmore (2013)

It is the effective integration of craftsmanship, technology, and design that can significantly revitalise an area and enhance its appeal to a wider and more responsible audience.

6. Case studies - The Venetian experience

Three case studies of craft enterprises with a cultural role in the community have been selected for the purpose of this paper: Martina Vidal Venezia, Orsoni 1888 and Lunardelli Venezia. The aim was to show three living examples of how the cultural aspect can be part of craft enterprises' strategies and to what level it can shape and influence the participation and activation of the local community and enhance the

tourist

experience.

a) Martina Vidal Venezia

Martina Vidal Venezia, located in the island of Burano - Venice is a family-owned craft business that has been engaged in the manual manufacturing of the world famous Burano lace for four successive generations. Today, lace is mostly used in the creation of clothes and luxury home linen textiles.

Alongside its product endeavours, the company provides educational courses at multiple proficiency levels to facilitate the acquisition of skills in the craft of Burano lace-making. In addition, it gives visitors the opportunity to access the family museum and atelier.

The Home Linen Atelier "Martina Vidal Venezia" created by Martina and her brother Sergio, was conceived as a concept store where to transfer the experience, knowledge and skills of their ancestors and satisfy the needs of the most demanding customers.

Burano Island, situated in the Venetian Lagoon near Venice, Italy, boasts a storied lace-making tradition that has flourished since the 16th century. Rooted in the expertise brought by fishermen's wives, the distinctive "merletto a tombolo" technique involves intricate handwork with bobbins and special pillows. Crafted from high-quality materials like linen or cotton, Burano lace showcases intricate and elaborated patterns featuring flowers, leaves, geometric designs, and depictions of local life, distinguished by its vivid and bold colours.

Burano is home to numerous artisan workshops where skilled lacemakers continue this heritage, offering visitors a firsthand view of the meticulous craftsmanship. The Museo del Merletto serves as a repository of lace artefacts and tools, chronicling the evolution of this exquisite art form. Beyond its artistic significance, Burano's lace industry has become economically vital, attracting tourists and providing a livelihood for the local community. Efforts to preserve this tradition include educational programs and apprenticeships, ensuring the continued legacy of Burano lace, a globally recognized symbol of exceptional quality and craftsmanship.



Photo: © Museo del Merletto. A cloth made with the lace making technique.



Photo: © Settimo Cannatella. A cloth made with the lace making technique by Martina Vidal Venezia.

The strategies that have been put in action by the management team of the business associate, alongside the selling of the product, investments in the creation of a “cultural experience” addressed to the tourists that visit the Burano island. Such experience consists in the creation of a storytelling strategy to emphasise and reinforce the strong linkage of the products with the excellence of traditional craftsmanship and its connection with the local community. The investment in the establishment of its own family business museum was a strong move in this direction. The implementation of the Family Museum within the atelier was a strategic choice to firmly position the brand as traditionally tied to the local craft tradition and to actively involve visitors in the historical significance of lace heritage and to provide them with knowledge about the craft tradition and the manual techniques involved.

The museum exhibits a collection of antique lacework crafted using traditional techniques, encompassing various items such as tablecloths, centrepieces, collars, linen, handkerchiefs, fans, and wedding veils. The company possesses a comprehensive assortment of historical lace items, encompassing both vintage and contemporary artefacts. This collection offers a glimpse into the rich heritage of Burano Lace, as it has been passed down through generations of skilled lace workers and their predecessors. Within the museum's exhibits, visitors are afforded the opportunity to explore a variety of antique lace patterns originating from the XVII, XIX, and XXth centuries.

The next step is to establish an educational and training centre to draw interest from the younger population of this traditional handcraft and to train a group of motivated people in a lace-making academy. Regarding the integration of technology within operational procedures, the organisation uses online platforms as a means to advertise and publicise activities held within its premises. The company also engages with the local community by participating in speeches and panels dedicated to local craftsmanship (e.g. [Salone dell'alto artigianato italiano a Venezia](#), Venice Fashion Week) and events that attract panellists from the fashion, accessories and design sector.

According to the role classification of the craft enterprises proposed in the theoretical framework we could classify Martina Vidal Venezia as “Creator of authentic experiences for incoming tourists” and “Cultural transmitter”.

With respect to the technology involvement adopted inside the process the company uses online platforms to promote the events inside the facility. The company has recently undertaken an [experimental project](#) aimed at evaluating the incorporation of virtual reality technology to augment the visitor experience within the premises of the atelier as well as in off-site locations. The primary objective of the virtual reality project is to engage in storytelling pertaining to the company and the artistic and technical aspects of Burano Lace inside a digital setting. Furthermore, this content may be conveniently accessed and shared with craft museums across the globe through streaming capabilities. The objective is to not only increase knowledge regarding the endangered artisanal practise to a broader audience, but also to potentially generate interest and prospects for the upcoming establishment of the School of Burano Lace making, which is being pushed by the company. The establishment of a school of this nature would be beneficial in preserving the longstanding cultural tradition of the territory and transferring it to younger generations. In accordance with Richards (2021) retrofitting traditional crafts to be attractive to new generations can widen the pool of craft producers and expand the potential tourism market.

b) Orsoni 1888

Orsoni 1888 is today the sole furnace permitted to operate with fire in the island of Venice. This laboratory of unique artisan excellence is still using the same ancient process of glass making and technique employed by its founder Angelo Orsoni in 1888. This craft enterprise creates the mosaic tesserae by hand and is capable of producing mosaics with golden leaves 24k and more than 3500 shades of colours of Venetian Smalti. It was displayed for the first time at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889. Years later Antoni Gaudí was inspired by its beauty and decided to use smalti Orsoni in the decoration of the Sagrada Familia. Today the company, aside from the production of mosaics, has renovated its facility in the manner of a live museum, in which the craftsman can be seen at work by visitors. The area also conveys a library of the colours and provides valuable examples of how the mosaics can be applied in contemporary design. Orsoni organises guided tours of its workshop for visiting tourists.



Photo:

©



Fabrizio

Berger



Photo: © Stefano Pedrelli - The library of colour.

Orsoni is a unique legacy of an art that was handed down for four generations. The history of this Furnace goes back to the late 19th century when Angelo Orsoni, a man born in Murano island who was working in glass factories, set out for Paris in 1889. The aim of his travel was to show the world that, within the vast enclosures of the Great Exhibition in Paris, alongside the most avant-garde techniques that looked steadily towards the approaching the future, a place of honour could be assigned to the mosaic. In fact he created a multicoloured panel, as a sample collection of smalti and gold mosaic tiles. This was the age of Art Nouveau, when mosaic ceased to be regarded simply as a medium for religious works of art, and was used for the first time in secular art and decoration. At the start of the new century, Angelo Orsoni transferred his business from its primitive headquarters at the Misericordia to the Fondamenta di Cannaregio, where it is still situated. While he carried on experimenting with colour, Orsoni managed to display his genius in the field of technical innovation, introducing coal heating and inventing a rotating cylindrical press to compress the incandescent glass paste, in this way leaving the tesserae a more even surface.

Orsoni's name soon became linked to major projects such as those involving the Ecole des Beaux Arts, the Trocadéro, the Hotel de la Ville, the celebrated Opera House, the Sacré Coeur Cathedral in Paris, the Sanctuary at Lourdes and St. Paul's Cathedral in London, to name but a few. When Angelo Orsoni passed away the craft company was inherited and run by his son and later by his nephews, who successfully continued the mosaic decoration tradition and were responsible for the decorations of important masterpieces around the world such as the spires of the Sagrada Familia Church in Barcelona, and for those inside the Altare della Patria in Rome. In 2003 Trend Group, established in 2000 by Pino Bisazza, acquired the Angelo Orsoni foundry, enriching in this way the international company – already worldwide known for the production and the distribution of the industrial mosaics – with the historical handcraft Venetian company. Lucio Orsoni is still nowadays artistic consultant and Honorary President of the company. With the application of every single tesserae the Orsoni's history continues, as brilliant, as pure and as magical as the mosaics themselves.

The Culture-led role of the craft enterprise

The strategies that have been put in action by the management team of the business include the introduction of guided tours of the furnace targeted to visitors looking for off-the-beaten track immersive experiences in the local craftsmanship and specialists of the sector, such as designers and architects. Visits to the showroom are possible by contacting the furnace directly, by appointment and are currently being promoted through the enterprise's website and through articles in specialised blogs dedicated to craftsmanship, interior design and decor.

Offering to the visitor the possibility of witnessing the incredible workmanship with which the smallest tile comes to life really makes you understand why Orsoni's product has become a 'cult' Made in Italy product, in great demand in the world's most important residences or by the most highly-rated artists for the realisation of their works. The company has also engaged in several projects with the department of Management of Ca' Foscari University (e.g. Experior Project).

According to the role classification of the craft enterprises proposed in the theoretical framework we could classify Orsoni 1888 as "Creator of authentic experiences for incoming tourists".

With respect to the technology involvement adopted inside the process the company uses online platforms to promote the events inside the facility and has incorporated a digital storytelling approach to engage with visitor in a never ending experience that starts inside the showroom with a guided tour of the facility and through the interaction with digital objects to have a deeper understanding of the objects displayed and that expands online, through the corporate website, in which a digital narration of the library of colours is available on stream.



Image: Digital narration of the library of colours available on the company website.

Furthermore the company has recently engaged in a [project to experiment the application of Virtual and Augmented Reality](#) to allow remote virtual immersive experiences of the showroom to allow the user to dig into the history of the company, learn about the glassmaking tradition and the unique technique approached by Orsoni 1888 and visualise the possible applications of its products.

c) Lunardelli Venezia

Lunardelli Venezia originated as a result of the rich heritage of Lunardelli est. 1967, an enterprise situated in the Venetian region that has established expertise in woodworking for bespoke construction and furnishing endeavours. Lunardelli Venezia is renowned for producing artefacts that effectively encapsulate the multifaceted essence of Venice.

Even though this craft enterprise does not leverage on an ancient heritage strictly correlated to the city of Venice or a secular tradition, it is in the choice, use of materials and the handmade technique, the designs and collaborators choice that this craft enterprise represents an excellence.

The design and production process involves the combination of wood and several other materials. This amalgamation aims to reinterpret the historical knowledge of the island, enhancing its potential by adopting a contemporary perspective.

The wood is the main element adopted for the design pieces of Lunardelli for its connection with the city of Venice. Wood plays a concealed role in the structural base of calli and palazzi, serving as a fundamental support system for the city of Venice. It serves as a navigational guide within the intricate network of waterways across the lagoon, providing a safe haven for boats. Furthermore, historically, wood has been a vital component in facilitating the remarkable maritime endeavours of the Serenissima.



Photo: © Lunardelli Venezia

The Culture-led role of the craft enterprise

The strategies put in action by the management entail a series of actions aimed at affirming the brand within the recognised high-end craftsmanship enterprises of the city of Venice through a greater openness in participating and opening its laboratory to cultural and media events. On the product side, the move was to strengthen the bond with the city by conceiving the collections with direct inspirations drawn from the core elements and characteristics of Venice with strong emphasis on the storytelling. On the other hand the establishment of collaborations with established artisans such as Murano glass makers and local design studios.

Thanks to the involvement of a local communication and event company Lunardelli has committed in a journey to open itself more to the local community mainly through a series of different activities: a) Exhibitions during the Venice Fashion Week and the prestigious Homo Faber by the Michelangelo Foundation; b) Press tours inside the atelier to storytell about the product and its making of; c) Participation of the as panellist in conferences on the relationship between craft and tourism; d) Active engagement in a local network of craft enterprises; e) Collaborations with local artisans, both traditional and emerging designers; f) Participation to projects with students from Ca' Foscari University Venice; g) Hosting events and creating a dialogue with national and internationally recognised designers.

The company is in fact now part of a local craftsmanship network, [Alto Artigianato Venezia](#), which aims at developing cultural projects aimed at projecting the artistic work of craftspeople into the future by encouraging dialogue with contemporary design and an international public.

According to the role classification of the craft enterprises proposed in the theoretical framework we could classify Lunardelli Venezia as more oriented towards the “cultural mediator” thanks to the dialogue established with designers and the participation in panels and debates. With respect to the other case studies a stronger emphasis on the product marketability is placed, suggesting that more actions could be done to move in the direction of a culture-led craft enterprise.

7. Implications

The three cases examined in Venice clearly confirm the contribution of craft activities to the economy and life of the city of Venice providing a clear indication to design sophisticated experiences for the traveller interested in the material culture of the city. The three businesses have strong roots in the city's culture, participate in its cultural life, and actively contribute to the dialogue with the local schools and universities. Like other similar enterprises, they have been able to take advantage of the visibility they have gained in recent years by becoming a reference for informed buyers who follow the activities and projects of the enterprises on the most popular social media. It is precisely the work carried out by these three enterprises that allows us to shed new light on some implications that have been evoked in the theoretical discussion and that deserve to be deepened in light of what has emerged from the analysis of the empirical cases.

a) Towards a model of culture-driven regeneration

The opening initiated by Orsoni 1888 through guided tours and educational activities in collaboration with schools and universities, Lunardelli's participation in public discussion on the topic of craftsmanship in Venice, and the launch of a lace museum at Martina Vidal's Burano location confirm the importance of creating a new dialogue with the city. These activities already provide businesses with an economic return and significantly enhance their reputation and brand internationally. The Venetian case studies confirm that the role of craft enterprises should go in the direction of “re-publicness”, the act of increasing the public dimension of a space by providing accessibility to a wider number of subjects that would normally be excluded to them (Cancellieri et al, 2014).

The benefits of adopting a placemaking approach, as highlighted by Kutay Karacor (2014), include:

- Enhanced quality of life. The implementation of placemaking initiatives has the potential to enhance the overall quality of life experienced by residents, as it fosters the development of more dynamic, habitable, and environmentally conscious communities. Potential enhancements to public places encompass a variety of changes, such as augmented accessibility to amenities, services, and infrastructure, as well as heightened levels of safety and security.
- Enhanced social cohesiveness. Placemaking has the potential to facilitate the development of social cohesion through its ability to unite individuals and generate avenues for social engagement and the establishment of communal relationships. This includes the coordination of events and activities, including the establishment of environments that foster social engagement and communal interaction.

Simultaneously, it facilitates the incorporation of techniques for social listening to ascertain the requirements of the community, which serves as the initial stage in the implementation of a human-centred approach.

- Economic growth. Placemaking has the potential to enhance economic development through its capacity to attract fresh enterprises and investments, generate employment opportunities, and augment property values. This can encompass the promotion of local enterprises, the stimulation of tourism, and the revitalization of underutilised areas.

- Augmented sense of place. Placemaking endeavours have the potential to augment the sense of place through the commemoration of local history, culture, and identity. The strategies encompassed in this approach involve the integration of indigenous art and design aspects, the conservation of historical structures and notable sites, and the fostering of local customs and traditions.

- Enhanced attraction of the region. Through the collaborative engagement of the local community and other stakeholders, the practice of placemaking has the potential to foster the development of dynamic, habitable, and environmentally conscious environments.

b) Towards the construction of hybrid spaces

Empirical evidence gathered in the study of the three Venetian case studies confirms the fascination exerted by the places of making. Citizens, students, visitors, professionals, are all attracted by these spaces and by the possibility of using them for public conversations, lectures, business meetings, and conviviality. This is a confirmation of the fascination exerted by hybrid spaces where traditional manufacturing activities co-exist with service activities and tourist receptions.

In today's local communities, there is a growing and noticeable need for the creation of hybrid spaces. These venues, characterised by their multifunctionality, open accessibility, and diverse offerings, serve as crucial components in fostering community cohesion and development. Due to their inherent characteristics, hybrid spaces surpass the traditional limitations of singular-purpose establishments, evolving into dynamic hubs that cater to diverse community requirements. One essential trait is their openness to the community, serving not only as tangible edifices but also as communal hubs where people come together, engage, and share ideas.

Furthermore, these hybrid spaces function as environments where interaction and mixing occur, dismantling barriers and promoting the exchange of ideas and cultures. The richness of community diversity is expressed within these intersections, resulting in an entanglement of shared experiences. These hybrid spaces serve as centres for both creating and learning, where individuals may build skills, exchange knowledge, and foster innovative projects. The combination of tradition and innovation in these venues guarantees the preservation of the community's cultural legacy while also allowing for dynamic adaptation to modern contexts.

In synthesis urban and cultural planning should go in the direction of the establishment of hybrid spaces in pursue of the following benefits:

- a) Open multi-functional places to the community;
- b) Create a space and enhance the occasions of interaction and contamination;
- c) Promote making and learning experiences;

d) Facilitate the encounter of tradition and innovation.

c) Towards the promotion of community driven participatory design

Among the reasons for the notoriety and success of the three Venetian companies is their ability to involve citizens and the end consumers (both tourists and locals) in the product development process or in its customization. Motivated hobbyists can ask Orsoni for learning sessions to acquire specific skills in glass mosaic. Some of them have the chance to build their own mosaic thanks to the support of mosaic masters working in the company. Martina Vidal Venezia offers the opportunity to try out some elementary operations on lace techniques. Her future virtual museum will offer people the opportunity to practise the difficult art of lace making. It will be an important step in strengthening ties with the local community, which is less and less aware of the intricacies of the craft of lace-making, and with tourists who come from out of town and who are discovering these traditional crafts for the first time.

In order to promote interaction and community-based participatory design, a range of techniques and methods can be employed to actively involve local people and tourists. Several tools and strategies that are utilised in this context include:

- Various interactive methods such as workshops, games, role plays, simulations, and debates.
- Online tools, like interactive mapping platforms, discussion forums, and specialised web pages to facilitate citizen participation.
- Participatory design toolkits, crucial in facilitating a collaborative process wherein community members actively engage to establish design goals that are well-informed and rooted in community participation (Enterprise Community, 2021).

The utilisation of these tools and methodologies can facilitate the acquisition of information, establishment of trust, cultivation of ownership and empowerment within the community, as well as the promotion of collaboration, learning, and creativity among diverse stakeholders. Additionally, such investigation can facilitate the recognition of the community's requirements, preferences, and expectations, while also fostering the creation of innovative ideas, effective solutions, and proactive measures for the advancement of tourism development.

d) The craft enterprise as a model for social cohesion in urban manufacturing.

The three Venetian cases demonstrate the importance of the role of craft businesses as a focal point of the local community. The three enterprises constitute places that promote the culture of the city, where institutions can develop a dialogue with citizens about the future of the economy and labour, where design, art and technology can find original forms of experimentation. The stories of these three enterprises have also often intersected with the many experiments in social innovation that the city of Venice has initiated in recent years, providing a practical and symbolic contribution to the start-up and success of major projects such as, for example, Homo Faber.

Social innovation, a dynamic force within communities, operates as a local asset, fostering transformative processes and serving as a catalyst for change. This paradigm

fundamentally reconceptualizes urban regeneration, framing it as a gradual and grassroots-driven evolution. In this model, community-based organisations play a pivotal and cohesive role, acting as the architects of positive change within their neighbourhood.

The approach places a significant emphasis on harnessing internal sources for revitalization investments and regeneration activities, thereby activating the untapped potential inherent in existing community assets (Ostanel, 2017). Craft enterprises, in particular, emerge as compelling models for this social cohesion within urban manufacturing. These enterprises act as microcosms of community-driven economic and cultural vitality. By leveraging traditional craftsmanship and embracing modern innovation, craft enterprises become focal points for social engagement and economic empowerment. The collaborative nature of craftwork inherently promotes interpersonal relationships and mutual support, laying the foundation for a closely-knit community.

The integration of craft enterprises into urban manufacturing not only preserves cultural heritage but also sparks a dynamic interplay between tradition and contemporaneity. The craftsmanship involved in these enterprises becomes a vehicle for skill-building and knowledge exchange, fostering a sense of collective identity and pride within the community (Micelli, 2016). As individuals engage in the creation process, they contribute to the community's narrative, reinforcing a shared commitment to its well-being.

The relationship between social innovation and craft enterprises unfolds as a powerful catalyst for social cohesion in urban manufacturing. By recognizing and activating the inherent capacities within communities, particularly through the lens of craft-based enterprises, urban areas can embrace a holistic approach to regeneration that is driven by residents.

8. Conclusion

Crafts are intrinsically intertwined with the geographical location, since they establish connections between the indigenous resources, cultural practices, and physical environment throughout the creation of various artefacts. Individuals possess an inherent inclination to acquire knowledge pertaining to various geographical locations and the corresponding cultural aspects.

This paper aimed at analysing how the success of craft companies through the enhancement of local know-how, the active involvement of designers, and the adoption of technologies (Boes et. al, 2016 and Frew, 2000), can contribute to the cohesion and generativity of an entire local community. The literature highlighted how these results have been already achieved in different contexts. The case of Venice, with the three firms examined, confirms this hypothesis and indicates a specific role for these enterprises as a junction between the local community and qualified tourist flows.

Obviously, craft firms alone do not have the economic power to afford, alone, a strategy that is mostly committed to the local community enhancement. Trade associations, municipalities and private foundations should actively be engaged in the establishment of effective partnership and collaborative networks that allow a group of firms to open

their service and or facilities to the local community. As literature shows, this can lead to beneficial outcomes for the local economic and territorial ecosystem, from which also the visitor experience can benefit. This is due to the authenticity and sense of place that is developed when a touristic place is based on a safe relationship between the space given to the local community and that that can be accessed by visitors. By adopting a holistic approach, craft can be a catalyst for future progress, rather than solely as a means of safeguarding cultural heritage for the sake of tourism.

In the realm of cultural preservation and the transmission of information across generations, technology plays a crucial and highly important role. Within the realm of customs, artisan culture, and technical heritage, technology plays a key role in facilitating the smooth transmission of ancestral wisdom to subsequent generations. The precise documentation and dissemination of ancient crafts and technical abilities can be achieved through the utilisation of digital platforms, augmented reality, and interactive multimedia. Not only does this practice serve to protect these significant elements of cultural heritage from the detrimental effects of time, but it also enhances their accessibility and appeal to the present-day younger generation.

The study conducted in Venice confirms the potential of craft enterprises in the tourism processes. In order to integrate their presence and preserve their role, it is imperative to map the specific touchpoints that could activate the tourist involvement without compromising the key activities of the firms. Narratives pertaining to specific locations should encompass more than just the physical attributes of the place; they should also incorporate elements that establish connections with the cultural and creative aspects of the visitors themselves. Yet territorial regeneration is not only visitor centred, yet community centred, with the development of strategies and activities that enhance the livability, accessibility and usability of the spaces to locals (Iunius et al., 2015). This approach requires a broader vision to be adopted by craft organisations with the support of other stakeholders.

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