

“Weaving Bonds”: Visual Thinking, Aesthetic Choices, and Processes of Semiotic Transfer in the Digital Cultural Representation of Place

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Abstract

This study examines the development of collaborative and interconnected digital cultural applications through the project “Weaving Bonds”, created by twenty adult learners in Corfu. The project combined local cultural references with digital storytelling, visual design, and the creation of online cultural content. The research examines the process through which participants transformed diverse historical, photographic, and symbolic material into a coherent digital representation of place. Attention is given to the ways in which images, colors, symbols, spatial arrangements, and narrative elements were selected, adapted, or excluded during the development of the final applications. The analysis shows that the representation of local identity emerged through an ongoing process of interpretation, negotiation, and aesthetic refinement rather than through the simple presentation of cultural information. The study concludes that visual thinking and semiotic transfer can contribute to the creation of digital cultural works that communicate as a living field of memory, experience, and collective identity.

Keywords

Visual Thinking, Aesthetic Curation, Image Semiotics, Digital Cultural Representation, Cultural Landscape

1. Introduction

This study examines how visual thinking, aesthetic choices, and processes of semiotic transfer are organically linked in the creation of the collaborative digital project “Weaving Bonds”, which aims to digitally represent the cultural landscape of Corfu with reference to the island’s identity. Twenty adult learners participated

in the initiative as part of a DYPA training program, divided into four groups of five people, who developed a central website and mapped cultural narratives using two different tools—the first tool used was Webnode and the second was the ERSI Storytelling Map, where the content relates to the olive tree and skincare products made from its fruit, a proposed wellness experience in the olive grove, and finally, graphic material featuring the kumquat. The study focuses on the production process and the curation of the result. It analyzes how the primary information (texts, archival material, and photographs) was collected and how these elements were compared with one another in terms of their aesthetic, morphological, and semantic relevance. This comparative evaluation led to the final filtering process, during which specific visual elements were digitally incorporated, while others were discarded to ensure the homogeneity of the work. The theoretical framework of the study is structured around three central pillars: visual thinking, aesthetic choices, and processes of semiotic transfer. Through this lens, the study examines how the learners' design decisions and the arrangement of the content contributed to the formation of a cohesive narrative identity. The study argues that digital cultural work is not a simple compilation of material, but a complex process of selection, interpretation, and synthesis, through which the selected elements are transformed into vehicles of collective cultural meaning.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Activation of Visual Thinking

Visual thinking is defined as the cognitive process through which the learner observes, analyzes, and organizes the information conveyed by a visual stimulus (Grandin, 2022). According to Rudolf Arnheim's (2007) foundational theory, visual perception is not a passive, mechanical recording, but an intrinsic cognitive function in which the act of seeing is identical to thought itself. In this context, elements of a photograph such as the depicted forms, color palettes, and spatial relationships function as structural components that define how the viewer perceives and interprets the visual field (Arnheim, 1999). This process goes beyond simple visual recording. It involves actively examining the image, evaluating alternative options, and identifying those morphological characteristics that serve a specific communicative and narrative purpose. The image is transformed from a simple, decorative element of the work into a dynamic medium for thought and the production of meaning (Arnheim, 2007).

It was precisely this cognitive process that was translated into a design practice during the creation of the digital project by the twenty adult learners of DYPA. Through photographic documentation, the original cultural material of Corfu was digitally reconstructed, transforming local elements into vehicles of a broader cultural identity. During the creation of the digital project, visual thinking is already engaged from the stage of material collection. Photographing a specific place or object that functions as a cultural symbol did not automatically lead to the inclusion of the image in the final work. Instead, this was preceded by the production

and compilation of multiple versions, which were systematically examined in terms of the morphological elements that would determine the final composition of the digital project. Factors such as the quality and direction of light, the value of specific points in relation to the whole, as well as the capture of a particular moment of the day, were evaluated to place the desired emphasis on local landmarks. At the same time, the dominant color palette and the shooting angle played a decisive role, ensuring the conceptual clarity of the subject. All the above choices gave the students the opportunity to convey their intended meaning and ideas in the final project, making the selection of each image the result of a conscious process of comparison and evaluation.

This process requires careful observation not only of the central theme but also of the individual elements that make up the visual frame. Such elements included the background which, in the case of the graphic design team, was created entirely using specialized digital tools the details, tonal contrasts, as well as the presence of any unwanted objects that could hinder the final selection. The relationship between the main subject and its surroundings directly influences the overall function of the image. For this reason, as part of the analysis of visual data, it was deemed necessary to systematically observe the entire surface of the image, including its borders and edges. This approach prevented the gaze from focusing exclusively on the center, ensuring that elements which critically influence the final interpretation of the work would not be overlooked. Visual thinking is also linked to the ability to recognize recurring patterns and common characteristics across different images. By comparing the available material, the trainees identified similar shades and textures that allowed them to establish a unified aesthetic direction. This process is particularly critical when the final project spans different digital applications, as the random selection of unrelated visual elements carries the risk of a fragmented and inconsistent presentation.

In the case of the digital representation of specific landmarks in Corfu, the visual approach was not limited to searching for attractive photographs. Rather, the images had to be organically relevant to the content of each application, conveying the unique character of the landmarks places of social interaction and renewal of vows as well as the central symbols of the olive tree and the kumquat. A photograph of an olive grove, for example, was selected based on how it highlighted the natural light, the density of the trees, and the sense of serenity required by the proposed wellness experience. Similarly, the depiction of the olive tree focused on the trunk, the leaves, or the fruit, depending on whether the intended narrative concerned historical continuity, the natural raw material, or the connection to the production of skincare products. The selection of content was not limited exclusively to visual material but also extended to the texts included on the digital platforms. Visual thinking had a decisive influence on how the text was organized within the page, as its length, its placement within the digital interface, and its direct relationship with the images determined the balance of the composition. Ensuring semantic and visual correspondence was fundamental to avoiding mis-

matches, such as placing text about olive oil production next to photographic material related to kumquats. Furthermore, a lengthy text next to a small image could create visual imbalance, while presenting information without a clear hierarchy would make navigation and comprehension difficult for the user. For this reason, the selection and editing of the texts involved a rigorous evaluation of their informational adequacy and clarity, with the aim of ensuring they function in a complementary and equal manner alongside the visual material.

In this context, participants were asked to select which historical and cultural details were truly essential to the project's structure, abbreviating or omitting elements without altering the fundamental meaning. The relationship between text and image was redefined, moving away from a tautological description in which the image would simply repeat the text or the text would convey the visual content verbatim. Instead, a complementary relationship was sought, in which the image conveys the atmosphere and feeling of the space, while the written text provides the necessary historical and interpretive context.

The process of selecting content therefore also involved the act of rejection. The rejection of a photograph or a text did not imply that the material was of low quality, but was related to overall aesthetic compatibility, the avoidance of redundancy, or the inability to serve the central narrative thread. The ability to abstract and delimit material is a fundamental component of curation, as it contributes to clarity, coherence, and more effective guidance of the end user's attention. Finally, visual thinking is linked to anticipating how the user will perceive and experience the final work. The strategic choice of the first image displayed on the desktop and its retention as the background served as the visual core of the central message, which in this specific case conveys the concept of "weaving bonds".

The order in which the information appears was organized in such a way that the mapped landmarks allow the website user to select and identify with the specific location that corresponds to their own expectations of a significant personal moment. The careful alternation of text and photographic sections linking the individual digital pages creates a defined viewing and reading path. Through these design decisions, the content ceases to exist as a random collection of scattered elements and is transformed into an organized visual and narrative sequence, which gradually guides the user toward a deeper understanding of the work's cultural significance.

2.2. Aesthetic Analysis of Digital Composition

The aesthetic analysis of a digital work goes beyond a simple evaluation of its external appearance and a subjective, intuitive judgment regarding the beauty of the result. Instead, it systematically examines how the content and functionality of the interface are organically interconnected, creating a unified and coherent experience for the user (Soares et al., 2022). In the digital environment, aesthetics emerges through the dynamic composition of multiple and diverse elements. The selected photographs are accompanied by texts that delve into the central meaning of the

images, while color palettes and typographic choices are strategically employed to emphasize the content's meaning. The use of bold type to highlight key points or the incorporation of direct quotes within quotation marks using italics serve as tools for visual hierarchy. At the same time, graphic elements, the management of negative space (gaps), and the sequence in which information is presented play a decisive role in the overall architecture of the webpage (Costello, 2023). Each individual element derives its significance from its position and the interdependent relationship it forms with the others. For this reason, composition emerges as a key factor in aesthetic organization, as it determines the spatial distribution of elements within the digital page. The placement of a photograph, the scale and size assigned to it so that it dominates as the central theme, its distance from the text, and its interaction with the other visual stimuli directly influence the direction of the gaze and the perceived hierarchy of information. A large, central image can serve as a primary entry point (anchor point) into a thematic unit, while smaller accompanying images provide focused details, supporting specific aspects of the cultural narrative (Arnheim, 2022).

The choice of scale is not merely a technical decision but is directly linked to the weight and conceptual significance attributed to each element. The structural balance between the image and the written text is essential for creating a readable and cohesive digital composition. When text occupies an excessively large portion of the screen, there is a risk that it will limit the visual impact of the image and cognitively burden the user's navigation. Conversely, the excessive and disconnected use of images without the necessary interpretive context produces a result that is aesthetically appealing but conceptually ambiguous. Aesthetic curation, therefore, consistently seeks a relationship of organic complementarity, where the text provides the necessary informational foundation and the image enhances the user's emotional engagement, as the user is influenced by the atmosphere and cultural dimension of the content. Color is another defining factor in digital composition. Color choices can structurally link different pages and applications, shape the evocative atmosphere of the project, and enhance the recognizability of a specific theme. In the case of the olive tree, the students employed green and earthy, natural shades with the aim of directly evoking the soil and the leaves of the olive tree. They applied the same reasoning to the logo design, making it clear to users that this website is dedicated to products derived from the olive tree and its fruit.

Similarly, for the website focused on the creation and weaving of ropes, the color white was the dominant choice. As part of their marketing course, the students were taught about the psychology of colors and the emotional reactions they can evoke in consumers, thus, they chose white and the depiction of white threads weaving the bonds of oaths. Their goal was to convey a sense of the enduring nature of these bonds, as well as tranquility, purity, and mutual care.

In the graphic material related to the kumquat, orange and warm hues were used to highlight the fruit's characteristic color and establish a direct, organic connection with this iconic local product and the visual identity of Corfu. The use of

color, however, requires consistency and restraint. The aimless coexistence of many different colors without a clear functional purpose risks weakening the project's cohesion and distracting the audience from the central content. For this reason, establishing a predetermined and limited color palette helps lay the foundation for a unified aesthetic direction. At the same time, controlled color contrasts were used strategically to distinguish between thematic sections, serving as visual cues that guide the user to the most important parts of the digital application.

Typography plays an equally decisive role in shaping the aesthetic and narrative identity of the digital project. The choice of an appropriate typeface, font size, and line spacing (leading) are not merely decorative decisions, but tools for attracting attention. The clear typographic distinction between headings and the main body of text serves as a navigational guide, allowing the reader to immediately grasp their structural position within the individual sections (Tham et al., 2024). Different typefaces convey different messages: a decorative typeface (serif or script) can lend a sense of formality and historicity, while a more modern and distinctive design (sans-serif) exudes simplicity and minimalism. However, the choice of typeface should not be based solely on style, but primarily on its functionality, that is, its ability to maintain legibility across different screens and display sizes. This factor is extremely critical in the digital environment, as the selected font must have cross-platform compatibility so that it renders correctly without technical distortions for users with different operating systems and devices. The visual rhythm of the digital composition is dynamically shaped through the deliberate alternation of digital content, cartographic data, and graphic elements. The monotonous repetition of exactly the same layout can cause "visual fatigue", while constant and unjustified changes in structure may cause cognitive confusion for the user. A coherent digital rhythm is based on the organic repetition of certain consistent design choices, as well as their controlled variation depending on the nature and type of information being presented. In this way, the user recognizes the structural coherence of the project without getting the impression that the individual web pages are identical.

The overall atmosphere of digital work emerges through the systematic interplay of the above factors (Papadopoulou, 2013). It is not the product of a single photograph or a random color choice, but rather the result of the combined effect of image, layout, and rhythm. For example, a digital application focused on the wellness experience in an olive grove should cultivate a sense of calm, natural continuity, and gentle flow. The use of naturally lit photographs, limited text, soft color tones, and a clean, minimalist layout all work together to support this feeling. In contrast, a digital invitation featuring the kumquat develops a more intense and dynamic visual character, which is highlighted through the fruit's vibrant color, the decorative repetition of the motif, and its connection to the festive and functional aspects of the publication.

The aesthetic curation of these diverse applications required maintaining a common corporate and visual identity (branding), without, however, undermin-

ing the distinct characteristics of the individual thematic sections. The main website, the mapped narratives, the skincare product pages, the wellness offerings, and the graphic design elements each served different functions and addressed diverse needs. Despite this diversity, they needed to be recognized as integral parts of the same digital ecosystem. This cohesion was achieved through shared color schemes, similar typographic conventions, and a consistent methodology for integrating images and text. Achieving this result was the outcome of close collaboration and coordination among the students, which ensured a smooth and seamless transition from one website to another.

Consequently, aesthetic analysis allows for the examination of the digital work as an organized and unified composition rather than as a fragmented collection of independent elements. The focus of research shifts from the mere presence of photographs and texts to the way in which they were prioritized, correlated, and arranged in space to shape a specific experience of viewing, reading, and interaction. The project's aesthetic identity is the culmination of a series of choices, trials, and revisions, all aimed at organically linking cultural content with the form of its digital presentation.

2.3. Semiotics of the Image: Function and Conveyance of Cultural Symbols

Image semiotics systematically examines the way in which visual elements function as “signs” and convey deeper meanings that transcend their simple, literal representation (Lagopoulos & Boklund-Lagopoulou, 2016). An image is not limited to the passive presentation of a specific geographical location or a natural element. Rather, it is embedded in a broader network that is organically linked to cultural references, social values, and collective memories. Its conceptual significance, therefore, is not found exclusively in its immediate figurative content (denotative level), but primarily in the associative connections and implications (connotative level) it evokes in the viewer through shared and established cultural codes (Barthes, 2007; Papadopoulou, 2019).

In the context of visual communication, the concept of a sign can take various forms: it can be a depicted figure, a specific color choice, a natural landscape, or a recurring graphic motif (Svaligou, 2011). Its semantic function depends entirely on the context in which it is placed, as well as on the interdependent relationship it develops with the other components of the composition. A single object can take on radically different meanings depending on its photographic framing, the accompanying text, the chosen title, as well as the color palette or the ultimate functional purpose of the digital application (Tsatsoulis, 2015). For this reason, semiotic analysis avoids examining visual elements in isolation. Instead, it takes a holistic approach to the network of relationships and contexts (Papadopoulou, 2018), through which the final cultural meaning is produced, transformed, and crystallized. The website “Weaving Bonds” served as the central hub of this digital ecosystem, around which the other applications were structured and organized.

The central website served as a common point of reference that linked the mapped cultural routes with local products and the recommended experiential activities. The title “Weaving Bonds” itself took on a powerful symbolic function, as it directly referred to the deeper connection between people, communities, and places. The concept of weaving was not used in its literal sense but served as a structural metaphor for the gradual convergence of human paths and the ritual exchange of vows. Through the digital interface, users can navigate among alternative thematic sections and visual stimuli, which converge and complement one another on the central platform.

The remaining digital applications were not developed as isolated or independent projects, but as individual conceptual and thematic extensions of “Weaving Bonds”. Through their organic interconnection with the central portal, a cohesive, multi-layered digital ecosystem for cultural communication and the promotion of local heritage was established. While each application maintained its own distinct thematic focus, it simultaneously reinforced the project’s overall visual and narrative identity. This architecture allowed users to move seamlessly from the general cultural context of Corfu to more specialized digital experiences focused on historical landmarks, the olive tree, derivative skincare products, wellness offerings in traditional olive groves, and original graphic material for the Corfu kumquat.

The first thematic extension focused on selected landmarks of Corfu and the mapped cultural narratives. The landmarks were presented not only as historical monuments or tourist attractions, but as points that could be linked to the subjects’ memories, hopes, encounters, and personal commitments. Through photographic documentation, written text, and digital cartographic navigation, geographical and physical space was transformed into a dynamic narrative framework that successfully bridges and organically connects the collective history of the place with the visitor’s private, personal experience.

The second application was organized around the olive tree and the skincare products made from its fruit. In this context, the olive tree transcends its utilitarian dimension as a mere symbol of local agricultural production and becomes a powerful cultural symbol, evoking associations with the concepts of duration, care, the purity of natural raw materials, and the historical continuity of the Mediterranean. Its semiotic value shifted and was redefined depending on the angle of the visual representation and the accompanying interpretive context. For example, the focus on the relief-like texture of a centuries-old tree trunk semiotically reinforced the concept of historicity and endurance over time, while the clear depiction of the fruit itself or a finished olive oil-based skincare product shifted the meaning toward wellness, physical health, and daily care.

The third application involved the comprehensive proposal of an experiential wellness program in a Corfu olive grove. The olive grove was not approached merely as a passive natural environment or a neutral landscape but was symbolically linked to the concepts of inner peace, physical and spiritual rejuvenation, organic connection with nature, and detachment from the intense rhythms of ur-

ban daily life. The rigorous selection of photographic material characterized by diffused natural light, dense vegetation, and the complete absence of human presence catalytically reinforced this interpretive direction. In this way, the natural landscape took on a purely symbolic function, transforming from a simple backdrop into a vehicle for a specific and holistic experience of well-being.

The fourth application included graphic design elements and invitations featuring the kumquat. The kumquat served as a multifaceted visual and cultural symbol. Its vivid color, small size, and the fruit's characteristic elliptical shape made it instantly recognizable and ideal for graphic repetition. Its selection, however, was not based solely on its visual appeal. Its strong association with Corfu's culinary and tourist image allowed it to be used as a symbol of local identity. At the same time, because it is not originally a native element of Corfu's flora but was introduced and gradually integrated into local production and the collective image of the place, it could function as a symbolic metaphor for integration, adaptation, and "belonging".

In the graphic design of the invitations, the kumquat did not merely serve a conventional decorative function. Its precise placement within the composition, the rhythmic repetition of the iconographic motif, its vivid color, and its relationship to the typography all contributed to the creation of a distinct visual identity. The fruit was sometimes used as a central symbol, sometimes as a perimeter element, and sometimes as a distinctive, recurring motif. Each design choice directly influenced how the user perceived the relationship between the formality of the invitation, its celebratory and ceremonial function, and its local cultural references.

The interactive relationship between image and text was crucial to the functionality of all digital applications. The text could narrow down the possible interpretations of the image, guide the user's attention, or provide historical and cultural information that was not immediately apparent. A photograph of an olive tree could be interpreted simply as a nature image. However, when accompanied by text related to duration, local labor, or care, its interpretation shifted toward a specific cultural meaning. The image and the text thus functioned as complementary modes of meaning-making.

Through this structure, "Weaving Bonds" was not merely another webpage among many, but the central organizational and semantic core of the project. The individual applications functioned as interconnected thematic pathways that expanded the central narrative while simultaneously promoting various products, services, and cultural experiences. The overall organization demonstrated that digital cultural production is not merely the sum of independent pages, but a system of relationships within which each individual element reinforces the coherence and recognizability of the central project.

3. Methodological Framework

The three theoretical axes mentioned above allow us to examine the digital work

as a unified process of selection, organization, and production of meaning. Specifically, visual thinking concerns the way in which the available material is observed and compared, aesthetic analysis examines the form and composition of the final result, and image semiotics highlight the way in which the selected elements acquire cultural and symbolic functions. This section presents the methodological framework used to examine the production process, the participants, the digital works, and the material that was the subject of the analysis.

3.1. Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine how visual thinking, aesthetic curation, and the semiotic function of images contributed to the formation of the collaborative digital project “Weaving Bonds” and the individual applications organized around it. The research focuses on the process through which the initial photographic, textual, and informational material was collected, compared, selected, and ultimately rejected before being incorporated into the final digital product. The study does not aim to evaluate the participants’ learning experience or to assess the effectiveness of the training program. Instead, it focuses on the resulting digital work and the design decisions that led to its creation. Particular emphasis is placed on the selection of photographs and texts, their interrelationship within the digital composition, the use of colors and fonts, the visual hierarchy of information, as well as the symbolic use of elements associated with the cultural identity of Corfu. In this way, the study explores how different thematic and aesthetic directions were organized into a unified and interconnected digital whole.

Based on the above objective, the research is structured around the following research questions:

RQ1: How did choices regarding color, layout, visual hierarchy, and the relationship between image and text contribute to the formation of a coherent aesthetic identity?

RQ2: In what ways were the olive tree, the kumquat, the olive grove, and the selected landmarks used as visual and cultural signifiers within digital applications?

RQ3: How did “Weaving Bonds” function as the central hub connecting the individual applications, and how did their digital interconnection support the project’s overall narrative?

These research questions allow us to examine the digital project not only as a final product but also as the result of a sequential process of observation, selection, processing, and synthesis. This approach aims to highlight how technical and design decisions were transformed into vehicles of aesthetic and cultural meaning.

3.2. Participants and Implementation Context

Twenty adult learners participated in the initiative. They were enrolled in a DYPA training program in Corfu. The participants were organized into four groups of five and worked collaboratively on the development of the central digital project

“Weaving Bonds” and the individual applications associated with it. The program lasted approximately two and a half months, with four hours of daily participation. Throughout the program, the trainees engaged in gathering information, taking photographs, writing and editing texts, selecting visual material, and creating digital content. At the same time, they used website-building tools in combination with digital mapping and graphic design to transform the source material into organized digital applications.

The first team developed the main website, “Weaving Bonds”, and the mapped cultural narratives related to selected landmarks in Corfu. The website served as the central hub of the entire project, as the other thematic applications were organized and interconnected around it. The second team focused on the olive tree and the skincare products derived from its fruit. The app’s content combined information about the natural raw material, care practices, and local production with photographs, color schemes, and graphic elements that evoked the olive tree. The third team developed a wellness experience proposal set in an olive grove. The app focused on the relationship between the natural landscape and tranquility, relaxation, and the physical experience. To design it, they used images of the olive grove, brief texts, and design choices aimed at creating a gentle and natural atmosphere. The fourth group created graphic materials and invitations featuring the kumquat. The fruit was used as a visual motif and as a connecting element to Corfu’s contemporary cultural identity. The group worked on the composition of the invitation, the color scheme, and the repetition of the motif so that the graphic design would combine the local reference with the festive function of the invitations.

Although the four teams developed different content, their work was not treated as independent digital projects. The applications were linked to the main website and organized as parts of a shared digital ecosystem for cultural communication and promotion. Linking them together required joint decisions regarding the aesthetic direction, the presentation of content, and the user’s transition from one application to another (**Table 1**).

3.3. Research Material and Units of Analysis

The analysis focused on the final digital project and the various versions of the material that preceded its finalization. The main sources of data were the central “Weaving Bonds” website, the mapped cultural narratives, and the individual applications linked to it. In addition, the initial and final versions of selected photographs, texts, and graphic compositions were examined, where available. Comparing them made it possible to identify the changes made during the curation process. The final digital corpus consisted of four interconnected websites and one Esri StoryMap. Across these applications, the final material comprised 28 photographs and 19 textual units. The main “Weaving Bonds” website contained 12 photographs and four textual units, the olive product website contained three photographs and two textual units, the olive grove wellness application contained

Table 1. Visual design and aesthetic curation of digital applications.

Digital application	Item Under Review	Original form	Final selection	Analytical axis	Function in the project
Weaving Connections	Central image and background	Different images and color options	Selecting a white background and an image with threads	Aesthetic Analysis and Semiotics of the Image	Linking weaving to human bonds and vows
Mapped cultural narratives	Photographs of landmarks	Multiple shots and extensive information	Selection of shots and abridgement of texts	Visual thinking	Clearer connection between the place and the cultural narrative
App for the olive tree	Color, logo, and images	Different color and graphic design variations	Green and earthy shades evoking the tree and its fruit	Aesthetic analysis	Linking the natural raw material to skincare products
A wellness concept set in an olive grove	Photos and text length	More information and additional images	Natural lighting, larger images, and limited text	Visual concept and aesthetic analysis	Creating a sense of calm and connection with nature
Invitations featuring kumquats	Color and graphic motif	Different positions and sizes of the fruit	Use of orange hues and a repeating pattern	Semiotics of the image	Linking the invitation to Corfu's contemporary cultural identity
Overall digital project	Integration of applications	Individual thematic applications	Integration with the main website	Aesthetic coherence and digital organization	Creation of a unified digital ecosystem

four photographs and four textual units, and the invitation and graphic design application contained four photographs and four textual units. The Esri StoryMap included five photographs, five textual units, and three mapped locations. Each of the four websites also incorporated a map component as part of its digital structure. Throughout the course, the material underwent repeated revisions and refinements as new concepts and techniques were introduced. These included, for example, the psychology of color and other marketing and visual-design principles, which led participants to reconsider and modify choices related to images, text, color, layout, and graphic composition. Multiple intermediate versions were therefore produced during this iterative process. However, a numerical record of every individual draft was not maintained, and only those earlier versions that remained available were included in the comparative analysis.

The examination of the material was organized according to the study's three theoretical axes. The first axis concerned visual thinking and was used to examine the decisions regarding observation, comparison, and selection of the available material. At this level, the changes between the initial and final selections were documented. For the photographic material, both the selected and excluded images were retained and were available for comparison, although the reasons for each individual substitution were not systematically recorded during the course. The second axis concerned the aesthetic analysis of digital composition. The ex-

amination focused on how the content was organized within the pages and on the coherence developed between the main website and the linked applications. The individual elements were not analyzed in isolation, but rather their interrelationships and their contribution to shaping the overall aesthetic identity. The third axis concerned the semiotic function of images and cultural symbols. At this stage, we examined how weaving, the olive tree, the olive grove, the kumquat, and the selected landmarks acquired specific meaning through their placement in the digital work and their connection to the text. The analysis took into account that meaning arises not only from the visual element itself but also from the context in which it is presented. The final decisions regarding which images, texts, colors, and graphic elements were retained, revised, or removed were made by the participant groups. These decisions are reflected in the available versions of the digital material and, in the case of the photographic corpus, in the retained and excluded images. The rationale for each individual change, however, was not systematically recorded. Consequently, where the analysis interprets the function or meaning of a particular change, this is treated as a retrospective interpretation by the authors rather than as a documented explanation provided by the participants. A recording table was created to systematically organize the process. For each digital application, the following were noted: the element under examination, its original form, the final selection, the change made, and the function of the change within the overall work. The records were categorized along the three analytical axes to enable a comparison of the applications without losing sight of the differences in their subject matter and functionality.

The analysis was first conducted for each application separately and then for the overall digital ecosystem. In the first stage, the internal coherence of each project was examined. In the second stage, the applications were compared with one another to determine how they maintained their own identity while simultaneously connecting to “Weaving Bonds”. The process was completed by mapping the observations to the three research questions.

The first author conducted the initial analysis of the material and organized the observations according to the three analytical axes. The preliminary categorizations and interpretations were subsequently reviewed jointly by both authors. During this second stage, the observations were discussed in relation to the original and final versions of the material, and the interpretations were refined through discussion between the two authors before the final analysis was established.

4. Results

The results were organized according to the study’s research questions. First, the changes made during the selection and processing of the visual and textual material are presented. Next, we examine the aesthetic identity of the applications, the function of cultural symbols, and the role of “Weaving Bonds” as the central connecting point of the overall digital project.

4.1. Selection and Processing of Visual and Textual Material

The analysis showed that the final form of the applications emerged through the refinement and editing of the original material. Not all of the photographs and information that had been collected were used. Primarily, the elements that corresponded to the theme and function of each application were retained, while those that created repetition were removed, as were elements that were not connected to the central narrative. For the photographic material, the final selection was based on how clearly the subject depicted at is visible, as well as on the lighting and even the shooting angle, which allows the image to convey the desired atmosphere. For the mapped narratives, photographs in which landmarks were immediately recognizable were preferred. In the wellness application, images were selected that highlighted the natural environment of the olive grove and minimized the presence of elements that distracted from the landscape. In the app focused on the olive tree and skincare products, the photographic material was organized to illustrate the transition from the natural element to the final product. Images of the tree, the leaves, and the fruit were linked to the product photographs so that the app maintains a clear connection to the raw material and local production. A different approach was taken with the graphic design elements for the kumquat. In this case, the focus was not only on the photographic representation of the fruit but also on the possibility of transforming it into a graphic motif. Its shape and color were used in various positions and sizes until a balance was achieved between the decorative function and the legibility of the invitation. The editing of the text followed the same logic of restriction and specialization. The original information was condensed and organized into smaller sections so that it could be integrated into the digital pages without detracting from the impact of the images. General information not directly related to the application's subject matter was removed, while details explaining the historical, cultural, and functional significance of the content were retained.

In the cultural narratives, the texts focused on the relationship between landmarks and bonds of oaths, as well as the personal choice of place. In the olive tree application, emphasis was placed on the connection between the natural raw material and the care and products. In the wellness concept, the text was kept minimal to support the atmosphere without overshadowing the images. On the invitations, the text served primarily an informational purpose, while the local reference was conveyed more through the graphic motif. The selection of images and the editing of text evolved in parallel. In cases where the central photograph on a page changed, the accompanying text was also adjusted. Similarly, shortening a paragraph allowed for an image to be enlarged, resulting in a different layout. The final form did not, therefore, result from independent decisions, but from the gradual adaptation of the visual and textual material.

Overall, the analysis showed that the final selection was based on the relevance, clarity, and coherence of the material with the function of each application. The rejection process did not concern only low-quality elements, but also material that,

although suitable on its own, did not support the project's overall aesthetic and narrative direction.

4.2. Shaping the Aesthetic Identity

The analysis showed that the four applications did not follow a uniform and unchanging aesthetic. Each application developed a distinct visual character depending on its theme and function. At the same time, certain common choices in layout, information presentation, and page navigation allowed them to be recognized as parts of the same digital project. The main "Weaving Bonds" website was dominated by the use of white and the image of threads. This choice created a clean and gentle visual identity, while the thread served as a recurring connecting element. The central image served as an introduction to the concept of weaving human relationships and prepared the user for the transition to the themes that followed.

In the mapped cultural narratives, the aesthetic was shaped primarily by the relationship between the map and the photographs of the landmarks. The location of each point on the map served as an organizational element, while the images distinguished the individual stops along the route. The limited length of the texts allowed the photographs and spatial representation to remain dominant without interrupting navigation. Green and earthy tones were used in the olive and skin-care product application. This color palette maintained a consistent connection between the content and the tree, the leaves, and the natural raw material. The logo and product images were integrated into this aesthetic so that the commercial presentation would not stray from its reference to local production. The wellness concept set in the olive grove featured a more subdued visual composition. Images of the natural landscape occupied more space, while the text was brief and positioned in a way that did not obstruct the view of the vegetation and natural light. This choice shifted the emphasis from providing a large volume of information to creating a sense of calm and connection with the space. The graphic design of the invitations was dominated by orange and warm tones derived from the color of the kumquat. The fruit was used as a recurring motif at different scales and in various positions. The final composition retained the motif as a clear local reference, without, however, compromising the legibility of the invitation's information. The typography took on a more festive and decorative character compared to the other applications.

Despite these differences, the analysis identified common principles in the design of the applications. The use of clearly distinguishable titles, the limited use of different typefaces, the alternation of images and short text, and the avoidance of overly dense layouts contributed to the creation of visual continuity. These common design choices did not eliminate the distinct aesthetic of each application but facilitated the user's transition from one theme to another. Aesthetic coherence thus arose not from the repetition of the same colors and symbols across all applications, but from a common approach to organizing the content. "Weaving

Bonds” retained its role as the central visual framework, while the other applications developed more specific identities that corresponded to their content and purpose. The second research question is answered by the finding that the color of the images and visual elements such as the page background and their placement, the scale of the images, and the visual hierarchy were not used in the same way across all applications. They were adapted to the function of each project and, at the same time, organized according to common design principles, so as to form a whole with individual variations but also recognizable cohesion.

4.3. Cultural Symbols and Meaning-Making

The analysis showed that the project’s key visual elements were not used merely to directly represent a product, a place, or a natural element. Their placement within the applications and their connection to the texts transformed them into carriers of diverse cultural meanings. Weaving, the olive tree, the olive grove, the kumquat, and the selected landmarks each took on a specific function depending on the theme to which they were assigned. On the main website, “*Weaving Bonds*”, thread served as the primary symbolic element. It was not used merely as a decorative motif, but as a means of connecting the project’s various themes and beyond as it symbolizes the union of people through vows that weave together the threads of their lives. The image of the threads referred to the creation of relationships, the union of two people, and the gradual shaping of a shared path. At the same time, it supported the structure of the digital ecosystem, as the individual applications were presented as distinct parts connected around a common core. The selected landmarks also took on a function different from that of a simple tourist presentation. Their connection to vows, commitment, and the choice of place transformed the way they were presented in the mapped narratives. They functioned not only as points of visitation but as spaces to which personal and emotional meaning could be attributed. Their photographic and textual presentation allowed their historical identity to be linked to users’ contemporary experience. The olive tree took on more than one layer of meaning. In the context of skincare products, it was associated with natural raw materials, care, and local production. The presence of the tree, the leaves, and the fruit created a continuity between the natural element and the final product. In this way, the product was not presented as an isolated commercial item but as the result of a local natural element and a local production process. At the same time, the depiction of the trunk and the old olive trees reinforced the concepts of durability and historical continuity. The shape of the trunk and the sense of time it conveys allowed the olive tree to be associated with stability and resilience. Thus, the same element functioned differently depending on the visual and textual context in which it was placed. In the wellness context, the olive grove took on a more spatial and experiential function. The images did not focus solely on the tree as an individual object, but on the experience of the natural environment as a whole. The vegetation and the sense of seclusion transformed the olive grove into a place of tranquility and connection with nature.

The limited use of text allowed the landscape to play a dominant role in creating this atmosphere. The kumquat functioned differently from the olive, as its significance was based more on the recognizability of its shape and color. Its use in the graphic design directly linked the invitations to the contemporary image of Corfu. The repetition of the motif transformed the fruit into an element of visual identity that could be recognized without requiring extensive explanation. At the same time, the incorporation of the kumquat into the island's contemporary cultural identity brought out an additional dimension. Although the fruit was not originally native to Corfu, its long-standing presence and its association with local production have made it a recognizable part of the island's image. Within the context of the project, this characteristic allowed it to be linked to the concepts of adaptation and belonging. The analysis also showed that the symbols did not retain the same meaning across all applications. The olive tree could symbolize endurance, natural production, and care. The olive grove could function as both a productive space and an environment for well-being. The kumquat could appear as a local product and as a decorative motif that signified the invitation's cultural reference. The second research question is therefore answered by the finding that local elements were not incorporated into the applications with a fixed and self-evident meaning. Their cultural meaning was shaped through the combination of image, text, and digital composition. In this way, the symbols contributed to the differentiation of the individual applications and, at the same time, to their connection with the cultural identity of Corfu.

4.4. The Core of the Digital Ecosystem

An analysis of the overall project's structure showed that "Weaving Bonds" did not function as an independent application among the others (Papadopoulou, 2022). It served as the central entry point to the digital content and the primary level from which navigation to the individual thematic applications was organized. In this way, users began with a general proposition focused on building connections and could then navigate toward more specific products, services, and cultural experiences. The website's central role stemmed primarily from the functioning of the digital links (Papadopoulou & Panagopoulos, 2021) that were integrated into a common network, within which each application constituted a different extension of the initial theme. This structure allowed for a transition from the general cultural context to more specialized content. Users could first learn about the project's basic concept and then select the theme that best matched their interests and needs. Navigation was therefore not based on a strictly linear sequence but offered more than one way to explore the site. The mapped narratives maintained a closer connection to the main website, as they supported the selection of a location and the development of the core theme of bonds and vows. The remaining applications expanded on this initial concept to include products and services that could be linked to the overall experience. This relationship can be described as an interconnected digital marketing system. The main website pre-

sented the general framework, and the individual applications provided more specialized recommendations. This structure resembled the logic of affiliate marketing in terms of linking different promotional channels around a central project. However, its operation was not necessarily based on financial commissions from links, but primarily on mutual promotion and boosting traffic to the linked apps. The analysis also showed that linking the applications reduced the risk of them being presented as disconnected graphic exercises. Their inclusion in “Weaving Bonds” provided them with a common communicative framework and a clearer function. Each individual outcome could maintain its own thematic focus while simultaneously contributing to a broader initiative for cultural and digital promotion. At the same time, the central organization facilitated an understanding of the relationship between the different themes. Without the central website, the connection between the landmarks would not have been immediately apparent. However, through the shared digital structure, these elements were presented as sequential and complementary parts of an overall experience linked to the place. The third research question is answered by the finding that “Weaving Bonds” functioned as an organizational and communicative hub. Its significance was not limited to the content of the original website but extended to the way it linked different applications, organized the user’s journey, and supported the presentation of individual products and experiences as parts of a unified digital project.

5. Discussion of Results

The results show that the development of the digital project was based on a combined process of observation, selection, and aesthetic organization of the available material. Visual thinking facilitated the comparison of photographs, texts, and graphic design choices to retain those elements that aligned with the function of each application. At the same time, aesthetic curation allowed the different themes to take on a distinct character without straying from the project’s overall identity. The use of white and threads in “Weaving Bonds”, natural shades in the olive and olive grove applications, and warm colors in the kumquat material supported different aesthetic and communicative functions. Cultural elements were not merely used as images of local reference but acquired meaning through their connection to the texts and their placement within the digital composition. “Weaving Bonds” served as the central core that connected the individual applications and transformed different products, services, and cultural experiences into a unified digital whole. Overall, the study highlights that digital cultural production depends not only on the tools used, but primarily on the decisions through which the source material is organized and acquires aesthetic, narrative, and cultural coherence.

6. Conclusions

The study revealed that the creation of the collaborative digital project “Weaving Bonds” and its associated applications was based not only on the use of digital tools, but primarily on the systematic selection and organization of visual and tex-

tual material. The comparison of available photographs, the curation of texts, and decisions regarding color, layout, and graphic elements contributed to the formation of distinct yet related aesthetic identities. At the same time, weaving, the olive tree, the olive grove, the kumquat, and the landmarks of Corfu took on symbolic significance through their relationship to the content and context of each application. “Weaving Bonds” served as the central connecting point for the individual works and enabled their organization into a shared digital ecosystem of cultural communication and promotion. Consequently, the final result can be considered the product of a process of visual thinking, aesthetic curation, and cultural interpretation through which various elements of Corfu’s cultural landscape were transformed into cohesive digital content.

7. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the examination of a specific collaborative digital project developed by twenty adult learners as part of a training program in Corfu. The results pertain to the applications and materials created in this specific context and cannot be generalized to every form of digital cultural production. Furthermore, the analysis focused on design choices and the final digital output, without including a systematic evaluation of the user experience or data regarding the applications’ traffic and commercial effectiveness. Future research could examine how different user groups perceive the project’s aesthetics, functionality, and cultural symbols.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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