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Editorial: Cultural entrepreneurship and cultural initiatives: challenges in a new context

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Editorial on the Special Issue

Cultural entrepreneurship and cultural initiatives: Challenges in a new context

In contemporary society, cultural initiatives not only offer a stage for artists and cultural practices but also act as systemic connectors of diverse institutional domains. They provide special intellectual resources as well as a connecting infrastructure that enables a transformative interaction across artists, academic institutions, scientific communities, cultural entrepreneurs and other individuals and groups. The resulting transformative processes foster innovation, inclusivity, and resilience in our complex societal systems.

Cultural initiatives serve as hybrid platforms where disciplinary boundaries are reflected, reconfigured and broken down (Demartini et al., 2021). They can imply that universities engage with artists, that scientists collaborate with cultural institutions to enhance public understanding or that entrepreneurs draw on artistic practices to reimagine economic models creating complex cultural ecosystems (Bergamini et al., 2018; Dobрева & Ivanov, 2020; Magkou, 2024). An increasing number of studies take a contextualized approach, underlining the relevance of local embeddedness, neighborhood networks, and the social structure of cities as arenas for novel business models, organizational structures, and start-ups (Vestrum, 2014; Summatave and Raudsaar, 2015; Borin and Delgado, 2018; Ben Hafaïedh et al., 2023). These linkages are neither incidental nor can they be easily enforced by directing interventions - but can be observed in their multifaceted contexts (Pagano et al., 2021; De Bernard et al., 2022).

This joint issue between the *EJCM* - *European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy* and *PISB* - *Piccola Impresa* - *Small Business* aims to address these issues through

nine international contributions. It seeks to provide insights into the changing realities of cultural and creative activities and their implication towards sustainable development. The objective is to analyse these dynamics in action in various geographical locations and contexts.

Among the four papers published in the EJCOMP, we find contributions exploring governance, entrepreneurial dynamics and creative entrepreneurship, and sustainable regional development.

Kostica's *Does Network Governance Really Work? Evidence from Cross-National Comparative Research on Urban Regeneration in Belgrade and Amsterdam* examines governance systems regarding urban regeneration. By comparing the governance approaches employed in Belgrade's Savamala district and Amsterdam's NDSM Wharf, the research outlines distinct governance pathways and their respective impacts on processes of urban transformation. The study points out the effectiveness of stable, inclusive network governance in fostering resilient and sustainable cultural ecosystems while critically identifying the inherent limitations of hierarchical governance structures.

In *Becoming a Craft Entrepreneur: Reviving Heritage by Means of Tradition, Innovation, and Community in the Nove's Ceramic Ecosystem*, **Leonardi and Pareschi** undertake an analysis of the career of ceramist Pol Polloniato, proposing a model of artisan entrepreneurship that encompasses rootedness, experimentation, legitimation, and return to the community. Their findings highlight how craft entrepreneurship intersects tradition, innovation, and community engagement, thereby emphasizing its significance for regional development and the long-term sustainability of cultural ecosystems.

Knowledge Co-Creation in Arts Universities: An Entrepreneurial Mindset, by **Kuznetsova-Bogdanovitch and Ranzcakowska**, offers an in-depth examination of the integration of entrepreneurial thinking within the context of arts universities. On the basis on the theoretical framework of Communities of Practice and empirical data gathered from two European institutions, the authors explore how fostering an entrepreneurial mindset can enhance processes of knowledge co-creation (while also facilitating the alignment of artistic and institutional values) and investigate the inherent tensions emerging between entrepreneurial imperatives and artistic identity.

Fashioning Cultural Entrepreneurship: Heritage's Role in the Dissemination, Didactic and Research Activities Among Stakeholders, by **Vandi and Vacca**, addresses the function of fashion heritage in cultural entrepreneurship through the case history of the Gianfranco Ferré Research Center. It illustrates how the archive functions as a hub for didactical, cultural, and social sustainability, providing a model for replication in the utilization of heritage in the service of the creative and cultural industries.

In the contributions published in the *PISB* journal, the debate revolves around adaptive strategies, resilience and innovation in cultural ecosystems, with reflection on sustainable urban

development and the tensions between urban and peripheral areas (especially in the context of Rome).

Strategic Adaptations in Cultural Management: Organisational Resilience and Innovation in Creative Industries in Rome by Pastore and Corvo investigates how Rome's cultural institutions cope with the underlying challenges through adaptive approaches. Combining quantitative statistics and a qualitative interview analysis, the research illustrates the value of organisational flexibility and the supportive roles of infrastructure for resilience and innovation in urban creative ecosystems.

From Insights to Strategy: Mapping Rome's Cultural Heritage for Optimal Resource Management and Promotion by Masili, Conigliani, and Addis applies spatial analysis and cluster techniques to investigate the distribution of Rome's cultural heritage. The study reveals significant disparities between the historic centre and peripheral areas, pointing to context-sensitive strategies to promote the diversification of cultural offers, ensure equitable resource allocation, and foster the sustainable development of the urban landscape.

Lelo's *Creative Industries and the Innovative Urban Milieu: The Case of the Metropolitan City of Rome* analyses the spatial concentration of creative industries in Rome. Employing spatial regression modelling, the study highlights the significance of localised knowledge spillovers, providing empirical evidence that supports policy interventions aimed at fostering creative entrepreneurship and innovation within the urban context.

How Does Social Impact Influence Cultural Entrepreneurship? By Oppioli, Lanzalonga, and Biancone examines the adoption of digital solutions for the evaluation of social impact within the cultural and creative industries. Building on the insights derived from an action-research case study, the authors propose a framework that synthesizes the Theory of Change with Business Intelligence systems. This integrative model provides a replicable approach for aligning cultural activities with the objectives outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Lastly, *From Poltrona to Centro Studi Poltrona: How to Pivot on Cultural Resources for Organisational Rebirth* by Fioravante, Cau, and Piccioni investigates how organisational renewal can be fostered through the strategic use of cultural resources. The study introduces the concepts of the "artist-based enterprise" and the "project-based model," emphasising the transformative potential of artistic heritage as a catalyst for economic and cultural resilience.

In a nutshell, the contributions included in this joint Special Issue present a multi-dimensional analysis of how culture serves as a driver for change, shedding light on challenges, opportunities, and emerging patterns. They highlight the multifaceted nature of cultural and creative initiatives and their embeddedness within specific socio-spatial contexts. They reflect how different interventions can contribute to fostering resilience, driving innovation, and supporting sustainable development by promoting collaborative and adaptive practices. The intersection between governance models, entrepreneurial dispositions, and cultural resources emerges as a key driver for systemic transformation.

However, the modalities of the connections differ significantly across projects, cities and regions. Each article offers a specific case of how culture can unfold this potential. We invite the readers to explore, engage with the cases and understand their specific connecting contribution.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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