

## **Cultural Entrepreneurship versus Cultural Co-Creation Projects: new strategic proposal for the sustainability and value creation of cultural organizations.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The pandemic significantly impacted organizations, especially cultural institutions, highlighting the need for change. Today's Cultural Management has evolved, emphasizing the creation of value for stakeholders and ensuring the sustainability of cultural facilities. This period of transformation also presents a learning opportunity, where Cultural Co-Creation projects play a crucial role in advancing Cultural Entrepreneurship. In this context, we introduce the Systematic Model of Cultural Entrepreneurship versus Co-creation of Cultural Projects, which incorporates the concepts of "perceived change" and "felt change." To support this investigation, a quantitative methodology was employed, involving a questionnaire administered to 60 students, focusing on Cultural Co-creation as a tool for Cultural Entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** Cultural Entrepreneurship; Cultural Co-Creation Projects; Sustainability; Value Creation and Learning Opportunity

## 1. Introduction

The concept of change is now firmly embedded in cultural organizations, with some authors distinguishing between "felt change" and "perceived change" (Benaraba et al., 2022). This distinction has significant implications for Cultural Management, whether applied to heritage management institutions, cultural industries, or creative industries.

Given the evolving landscape, it is urgent to prepare university students aiming for careers in the cultural sector. This preparation involves not only introducing them to new technological concepts but also equipping them with entrepreneurial qualities. At this level, co-creation can serve as an effective pedagogical tool to achieve these objectives.

In the post-pandemic era, cultural organizations must achieve tangible results by creating value for stakeholders and ensuring sustainability. Therefore, the objective of this work is to explore and develop the concept of Cultural Entrepreneurship versus cultural Co-creation. It concludes that these concepts share common aspects, such as emphasizing entrepreneurial qualities, creativity, and innovation, and striving for value creation and sustainability.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What qualities must a cultural entrepreneur possess to effectively integrate into an entrepreneurship process versus a cultural co-creation project process?
2. What processes and skills should be integrated into an Entrepreneurship system versus a cultural co-creation project?
3. What results are obtained by the systemic application of cultural entrepreneurship processes versus co-creation cultural projects?

To answer these questions, a quantitative research methodology was employed through a questionnaire addressed to students who participated in a four-month extracurricular course on cultural and non-cultural co-creation projects. Additionally, a Systematic Model of Cultural Entrepreneurship versus Co-creation of Cultural Projects is presented, providing a theoretical framework, and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field of Cultural Entrepreneurship.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. State of the Art of Cultural Organizations in the Post Pandemic

According to Fuller and Rice (2022), non-profit organizations have slightly different focuses, contexts, and resources than typical for-profit organizations, so they may have experienced and responded to COVID-19 in ways not addressed in traditional business management research. In a paper conducted during the height of the pandemic, He and Harris (2020) shared their experiences with distance learning. In particular, they talk about the new reality and way of working and teaching students in on-line meetings. They also mention the problem that it happened suddenly and with little warning or training to the agents involved. In this regard, Kniffin et al. (2021) refer to the impacts of the pandemic on workers and workplaces, all over the world, which had implications for employees, teams, and work organizations. Objectively they talk about: (a) emerging changes in working practices (e.g. working from home, virtual teamwork) and (b) emerging changes for workers (e.g. social distancing, stress, and unemployment).

What we know is that the world has changed, as well as the way it is seen, the way we think and how we should lead our lives. In this regard, Benaraba et al. (2022) talk about this change being felt despite not being perceived and this is explained a little throughout this work. That is, regardless of the human tragedy of lost lives, broken families and scarred communities, the economic, social, political, and cultural changes

caused by the successive confinements instigated by the pandemic constituted a cultural legacy, which will live for a long time in the memories of those who went through this process, but also of future generations (Khlystova et al., 2022). In fact, many companies went bankrupt, but those that joined social responsibility events and combined their brands with these civic achievements, managed to obtain a lot of benefits and recognition from their target audiences. In another way, students perceive in the post-pandemic, their career opportunities in the cultural market full of uncertainties and educational institutions seek to implement a relevant and timely program that meets their desires and needs, on the one hand, and that adapt to the current situation, on the other. Therefore, the program to be offered includes more comprehensive training, addressing changes in career perceptions and future opportunities, that is, a program that is a learning opportunity and that follows Cultural Entrepreneurship and Cultural Co-Creation methodologies.

The Covid-19 has also exposed and exacerbated some social problems, such as poverty and inequality. Most of these explanations speak true when they say that there is a high degree of inequality between the most and least developed countries in the world, in terms of wealth, health, education and culture. Companies should now focus more of their efforts on tackling social issues and not just during Covid-19. The United Nations (UN) even called for efforts to achieve more inclusive and sustainable construction in the post-Covid period, instead of focusing on the world's problems as it did previously (UN.ORG., 2020).

The pandemic has also given consumers the opportunity and time to reflect on the basic meaning of consumption and the impact of their consumption not only on themselves, but on others and on wider society and the environment. Before the pandemic, consumers in the developed world were “spoiled” with the “choice overload” they had at their disposal. The pandemic shocked them with the idea and even a highly likely reality that their basic needs might not be met, in the sense that food and other goods might not be available to them. Change occurs as consumers begin to appreciate and value the satisfaction of these needs. At the same time, it changes consumers' perspective on how to pursue higher social and self-fulfilment needs. There is likely to be a significant shift towards responsible and pro-social consumption, in the sense that consumers consciously reflect on how to consume and make product/brand choices, to be more responsible with themselves, with others, with society and with the environment.

From another perspective, it became known that the Covid-19 pandemic was a collective traumatic event for many consumers, causing them physical, psychological, and emotional harm (He and Harris, 2020). Some consumers in this post-covid phase respond to these harms by resorting to a strategy that increases the urgency in seeking the pleasant experience of satisfying their emotional and sensory needs. The use of leisure and culture are part of this strategy and Cultural Management seeks ways to satisfy these needs. Delaying this pleasure will be seen as less desirable due to the greater level of perceived uncertainty about the future. Both the new sense of responsible cultural consumption and consumption aimed at satisfying emotional and sensory needs have implications for Cultural Management and Marketing. The projects that arise in co-creation must be entrepreneurial, encouraging innovation and creativity.

Two years after the end of the pandemic, we are beginning to feel the real effects it had on various leisure and cultural sectors. So, in terms of Tourism, the immediate impact resulted in most planes being grounded, tourist sites and hotels/restaurants closed, due to the social distancing measure introduced globally (Jaspreet Singh and Jagandeep Singh, 2020; Seetharaman, 2020).

However, what are the medium and long-term impacts? In the medium and long term, the result was again an increase in consumption, when consumers could not wait to get out of the house and visit places, travel, and dine out, despite fears of a slow return due to prolonged consumer fear of regarding the virus and health and safety concerns.

A more important question is: how does the pandemic shift social responsibilities to sustainable tourism and travel consumption? During the post-pandemic period, consumers restricted their travel, whether for leisure or business. The expected result of this, would be that restricted travel would negatively impact these companies and people who traditionally depend on the prosperity of this sector would be equally affected. This reasoning has once again led consumers to resort to their own moral judgments to decide when and how to travel. Likewise, as there is positive experience of the effectiveness of online meetings, tourists have restricted their business trips. When it comes to leisure, it is equally likely that more people will reflect on the decision to participate, whether in person or not, before booking their next trip or deciding

to join an event. It is more certain that they opt for more responsible and sustainable consumption environments.

Also, at the level of digital products, there was an exponential increase in just a few weeks. From another perspective, Seetharaman (2020) verified the opportunity that the pandemic presented by identifying on social networks, among others, an alternative business to digitize a viable cultural activity. To seize the opportunity of digitalization, cultural organizations need to be agile and quickly develop capabilities that can help them survive the changes that the environment imposes on them. A good example of this are educational institutions that have not only adapted online platforms to deliver virtual classes, but also designed educational products that combine interesting asynchronous features with synchronous classes. Likewise, virtual, and augmented reality began to be used in cultural facilities, enabling visits to continue to occur online with lower mobility costs for the public or from a citizenship perspective, increasing visits from new audiences who, by physical or mental disability, or due to lack of financial resources, had access to these spaces in an innovative and creative way, that is, in an entrepreneurial way. In another publication, Comunian and England (2020) ask whether Covid-19 represents a moment of crisis for the sector or simply to expose the unsustainable price of creative and cultural work. As for Khlystova et al. (2022) in the last decade, creative industries have also become an important sector of the global economy, representing 7% of global GDP. In his opinion, Cultural Entrepreneurship is important for the success of the creative industries sector, defining it as the *“process by which actors design cultural resources to promote entrepreneurship or to facilitate organizational or institutional innovation... to generate income from cultural activities”* (Khlystova et al., 2022, p. 1193).

The recent events of the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated that the creative industries have adopted new business models to operate during this crisis. For example, some museums began to offer exhibitions online, while musicians performed concerts via streaming broadcasts or recorded their performances, changing the experience, demand, and consumption. These industries struggled to adapt to new changes and be resilient.

In another way, Meng et al. (2023) state that, during the pandemic, museums, as public meeting places for citizens, experienced unprecedented difficulties due to limitations in operating normally in their traditional exhibitions and curatorship. Thus, museums have made corresponding emergency attempts to accelerate the construction of digital resources and service platforms. Such difficulties raised many potential problems with the applicability of electronic resources and the mismatch between users' expectations and museum services.

For Peñarroya-Farell and Miralles (2022), museums, theatres, concert halls and festivals were forced to close for months, leaving artists and performers out of work for almost a year. Some organizations were not able to adapt, while others improvised in response to whatever came their way, i.e. adapting their business model. For times of crisis or in this post-pandemic phase, these authors propose a set of steps to implement change. The first step is to identify the main factors driving change and understand their evolution and impact on the business model. The second step involves identifying the main capabilities needed to respond to the factors driving change. The third step involves identifying the gaps between current capabilities and the capabilities needed to successfully adapt the business model. The fourth step consists of developing a plan to fill the identified gaps and, at the same time, confront the emergency with the current stock of resources and capabilities, improvising to keep the cultural organization functioning, while the adaptation plan is implemented. Finally, the fifth step covers monitoring the results of the action and adapting the organization to the new reality.

## **2.2. Concepts of Cultural Entrepreneurship vs Cultural Co-creation**

According to Ratten (2021), in addition to a Covid-19 crisis management vision, it is necessary to have an entrepreneurial understanding, since there has been a substantial change in the lifestyle, culture and social interactions of individuals. For Kuckertz et al. (2020) the new ways of dealing with the Covid-19 crisis ended up leading to more Entrepreneurship. Furthermore, cultural change has resulted in a greater need for

Entrepreneurship and additional ways of thinking to adapt to the new way of life. It is known that entrepreneurs are more risky, innovative, and proactive than non-entrepreneurs due to their ability to respond to market needs Ferreira et al. (2008). This means that entrepreneurs will have certain characteristics and capabilities that will allow them to respond to emerging post-pandemic needs. The nature of Entrepreneurship involves trying new things and this mindset is necessary in the current crisis. Part of having an entrepreneurial mindset includes experimenting with new processes to get better results. To do this, cultural managers need to share and analyse the conditions of cultural organizations today to anticipate change. This can allow these organizations to quickly adapt to focus on new trends.

Elia et al., p. (2020, p. 3) defined Entrepreneurship as *“the process of identifying potential business opportunities and exploring them through the recombination of existing resources or the creation of new businesses to develop and commercialize new products and services”*. As a rule, this concept has to do with the business area, but its ability to adapt to the most diverse sectors leads to recognition of its application to other areas. In this regard, Ratten (2023) states that Entrepreneurship has, as a field of study, many sub-dimensions due to its usefulness. Specifically, and linked to the cultural sector, it identifies three: a) artisanal Entrepreneurship (related to handicrafts, ceramic manufacturers and jewellery designers); b) Creative Entrepreneurship (which refers to arts and entertainment and concerns a type of business activity that is innovative and different from what is done in that market); and c) Cultural Entrepreneurship (similar in some aspects to Creative Entrepreneurship, but focused on traditions and Heritage). Recently, Cimperman (2023) talks about Digital Entrepreneurship and Gupta and Bamel (2023) recognize that in the post-pandemic, organizations that survived resort to mobile and cloud solutions, admitting that Management practices, regardless of the area in question, are to transform through digital and the use of digital technologies.

When transposed to the area of teaching, we talk about Educational Entrepreneurship. According to Liao et al. (2023) this is an activity related to learning and dissemination of knowledge, which combines a look at pedagogy with information acquisition techniques. Mandrinos and Lim (2023) in turn, highlight that there has been greater emphasis in society in general on Entrepreneurship Education due to its impact in the region and internationally. At this point, the creation of co-creation projects and, of interest to the present work, cultural co-creation projects are particularly relevant Andriotis and Paraskevaidis (2023).

But what is at stake when talking about cultural co-creation projects? Co-creation projects are currently developed as active educational methodologies that contribute to solving real-world problems (Barbedo et al., 2023; Gordon et al., 2023).

### **2.3. Contexts of Cultural Sustainability vs Learning Opportunity vs Digital Cultural Entrepreneurship**

The COVID-19 pandemic has, in fact, impacted people's lives around the world in different ways (Benaraba et al., 2022). Discussing the impact of the pandemic on the culture and arts sector indicates that everything that happens in this industry also affects a country's educational system, as trained employees have better quality when performing their duties. Career perception is the aspiration that an individual has about the career to follow or to be achieved. It is the goal that someone must set to achieve the desired profession or current profession. Furthermore, it is the path perceived by the individual that he or she wishes to follow (Menon and Santha, 2017). This concept also refers to a process by which students will organize, select, and interpret their interests to develop a meaningful future career choice (Bordean and Sonea, 2018). Colleges and universities often provide career guidance to their students to prepare them after graduation (Nightingale et al., 2020). In this way and considering the modern demands of the student to have the ability to solve problems, the strategy of co-creating cultural projects to prepare for Entrepreneurship, but also as a learning opportunity seems to be the correct plan.

In the cultural market, sustainability refers to the ability of cultural institutions, projects, or practices to endure, thrive, and remain relevant over time while responsibly managing resources, both environmental and economic, to ensure their continued existence and impact. It manifests in different ways and like this, one can speak about financial sustainability, cultural preservation, environmental responsibility, community engagement, innovation and adaptation, long term planning and impact. In fact, Cultural organizations need financial stability to continue their operations. This involves securing diverse funding sources, such as grants, donations, sponsorships, and revenue from ticket sales or memberships. It also includes efficient financial management to ensure long-term viability. In another way, sustainability in the cultural market often involves preserving traditions, heritage, and artistic practices for future generations. This can include initiatives to safeguard cultural artifacts, promote local arts and crafts, or support indigenous knowledge preservation. More recently, Cultural institutions are increasingly focusing on environmentally sustainable practices. This involves reducing their ecological footprint by adopting eco-friendly technologies, minimizing waste, using sustainable materials in exhibitions, and promoting environmental awareness through cultural programs. Besides this, building strong relationships with communities is vital for sustainability. Cultural organizations engage with diverse audiences, involving them in programming decisions, and ensuring that their offerings reflect and serve the community's needs and interests. Also, sustainable cultural organizations are adaptable and innovative. They embrace change, experiment with new technologies, and evolve their offerings to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. Finally, sustainability in the cultural market involves long-term strategic planning to ensure that the organization's impact endures beyond immediate projects. This can include setting achievable goals, measuring impact, and assessing how the organization contributes to cultural enrichment. In essence, sustainability in the cultural market goes beyond mere survival; it's about fostering resilience, relevance, and responsibility. It's about ensuring that cultural institutions and practices not only survive but also thrive and contribute meaningfully to society while being mindful of their environmental, social, and economic impact.

The pandemic and post-pandemic scenario makes it urgent to reflect on the potential of the digital transition for Cultural Heritage, to increase critical awareness and democratize art, supporting heritage communities and common goods. “Digital Culture” brings together best practices in defining strategies for the digital transformation of museum and cultural heritage. Among them, Clini and Quattrini (2021) talk about technologies such as 3D, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and Mixed Reality (MR). The great challenge for cultural organizations is to reduce the gap between cultural organizations that are not digitally equipped and those that are equipped. Equipped institutions are therefore a key point in the digital transformation process. Another objective is to democratize access to heritage, supporting diversity, inclusion, creativity, and criticism, as well as promoting the development of digital skills in as many cultural institutions as possible. From another point of view, (Hussain, 2021) states that technology and digitalization are vital to help organizations survive in the competitive market. It is important to examine the impact of the pandemic on cultural heritage sectors. For the same author, digital transformation has accelerated business areas and helped organizations increase productivity and reduce costs, therefore exploring new business opportunities, agility, and dynamic capabilities for sustainability. Its main advantage is to guarantee doing more with less, reducing delivery sequences and time to market.

### **3. Empirical Study**

#### **3.1. Cultural Co-creation Case Studies**

During the Spring semester of 2022-2023, the Polytechnic of Porto (PP) implemented the 6th edition of its co-creation project. This initiative involved one lecturer and six students from each of the eight schools within PP, creating a significant innovation and creativity experience. At the conclusion of the project, 12

case studies were presented. For this specific research, only three of these case studies will be analyzed - specifically, the three in which some of the researchers of this paper were involved. Two of these projects were in the cultural and artistic fields, while the third was in the industrial field.

Like this, the first one was at the Soares din Reis Museum which post-pandemic main problem was: How to attract young generations to participate at the museum activities without the compulsory instruction of parents or teachers? The second one was at the International Art'Imagem Theater which wanted to go into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reducing the excess waste produced in their theater plays and other artistic activities, as well as reusing, in a sustainable way, all materials and equipment produced. And the third one was in an industrial association of Tâmega and Sousa composed of companies in the textile, metalworking or agri-food sector which look to reduce production wastes.

The students under the lecturers' weekly orientation should solve those problems during the semester. Each project had a students' team that varied in number but was supervised by 1 lecturer. Like this, the museum and the theatre project had 5 students each and the industrial association had 6. The team followed a sequence of steps that make up the structure of a co-creation project to find a solution to the challenge, respectively:

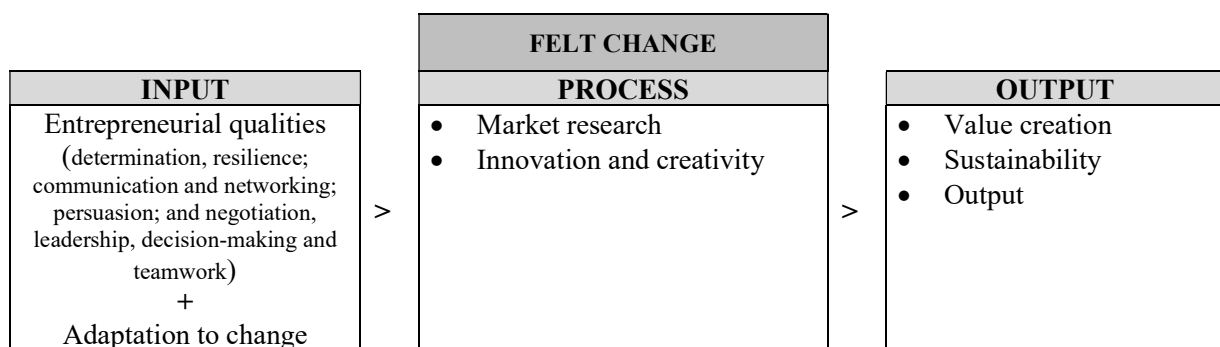
1. Definition of project stakeholders (first long list then short list).
2. Creation of empathy maps.
3. Design of insights.
4. Preparation of the Midway report and PESTEL analysis.
5. Systematization of an affinity diagram, paternities, and trends.
6. Creation of a prototype.
7. Participation in a pitch; and
8. Creation of a portfolio.

### 3.2. Systematic Model of Cultural Entrepreneurship versus Co-creation of Cultural Projects

In this post-pandemic period, cultural organizations are looking for a path that helps them balance between felt change and perceived change.

With this research work it was understood that, from a systemic perspective, it was possible to find the flexibility necessary to constantly adapt to changes, which are occurring in the cultural world at an increasingly faster pace.

This is how Figure 1 presents as input different entrepreneurial qualities together with the quality of adapting to change. These elements will be processed in the cultural organization which by its market research, innovation and creativity processes will reach the result, that can be either its cultural or business productions, or the creation of value for stakeholders or the defined sustainability modality.



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**PERCEIVED CHANGE**

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*Figure 1. Systematic Model of Cultural Entrepreneurship versus Co-creation of Cultural Projects*  
Source: own systematization

### 3.3. Research Methods and Data Collection

To understand whether co-creation projects are a good form of action to solve problems, regardless of whether someone is dealing with a museum, a theatre, or a factory, a quantitative research methodology was applied through a questionnaire addressed to students who took part in a 4-month extra-curricular course on cultural and non-cultural co-creation projects. Such questions are closed and seek to measure on an ordinal Likert scale with 7 points (where 1 meant nothing or completely disagree and 7 meant a lot or completely agree) the degree of agreement with the topics indicated as possible answers, according to the literature review. Thus, answers 1 correspond to “Totally disagree”, 2 correspond to “Disagree”; the 3 to “Partially disagree”; the 4 to “Neither agree nor disagree”; at 5 to “Partially agree”; 6 to “Agree” and 7 to “Completely agree”. The questions were:

1. What qualities must a cultural entrepreneur possess to integrate an entrepreneurship process versus a cultural co-creation project process?
2. What processes and skills should integrate an Entrepreneurship system versus a cultural co-creation project?
3. Which results are obtained by the systemic application of the process of cultural entrepreneurship versus of co-creation cultural projects?

The option for this quantitative method was since the respondents' level of education was high and the need to verify whether the elements collected in the literature review were confirmed in the practical context.

### 4. Findings and Discussion of Results

At the time of this communication, the empirical study is still ongoing. However, we can now share some preliminary findings and conclusions.

The systemic model applied to cultural organizations views these entities as complex systems composed of interconnected parts that influence each other and the organization as a whole. This approach draws from systems thinking, which emphasizes understanding the interrelationships and dynamics within a system rather than focusing solely on individual components.

In the context of cultural organizations such as museums, theaters, or arts institutions, the systemic model involves considering various elements that contribute to the organization's functioning, including:

- **Internal Structures:** This involves examining the organizational hierarchy, departments, workflows, and communication channels within the cultural institution. It considers how these structures impact decision-making, creativity, and overall productivity.
- **Stakeholders and Relationships:** Cultural organizations interact with diverse stakeholders, including artists, patrons, funders, staff, volunteers, and the community. The systemic model examines these relationships, their dynamics, and how they influence the organization's goals and operations.
- **Cultural Context:** Understanding the broader cultural landscape, including societal trends, values, and cultural norms, is crucial. Cultural organizations often reflect and respond to these contexts, and the systemic model considers how they adapt and contribute to cultural changes.



- **Resource Management:** This includes financial resources, human capital, technology, and physical infrastructure. The systemic model examines how these resources are utilized, distributed, and aligned with the organization's objectives.
- **Adaptability and Resilience:** Cultural organizations operate in dynamic environments. The systemic model emphasizes the organization's ability to adapt to changes, innovate, and remain resilient in the face of challenges.

Applying the systemic model to cultural organizations involves recognizing the interconnectedness of these elements and understanding how changes in one area can impact others. It encourages a holistic approach to management and decision-making, aiming for a deeper understanding of the organization's dynamics and fostering strategies that consider the entire system rather than isolated parts.

## 5. Conclusion

The research conducted so far indicates that cultural co-creation equips students in culture and leisure fields to navigate the emerging realities post-Covid-19. Meanwhile, Cultural Entrepreneurship is a management philosophy essential for cultural organizations aiming to achieve results, sustainability, and value creation. Despite appearing distinct, these concepts share commonalities: both emphasize entrepreneurial qualities, creativity, and innovation, and both aim for value creation and sustainability.

The data collected thus far allows us to address the three research questions as follows:

1. **Leadership and Strategic Thinking in Cultural Entrepreneurship and Co-Creation:** Both entrepreneurship and cultural co-creation processes require strong leadership, creativity, and strategic thinking. However, cultural entrepreneurs must tailor their approaches to meet the specific needs and goals of each process. Entrepreneurship focuses on market success, financial sustainability, and innovation, whereas cultural co-creation emphasizes inclusivity, collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and community impact. Effectively balancing these qualities can lead to successful and meaningful cultural projects.
2. **Skills and Processes in Entrepreneurship and Cultural Co-Creation:** The skills and processes required for entrepreneurship prioritize market success, financial sustainability, and operational efficiency, emphasizing strategic planning, innovation, and business management. Conversely, cultural co-creation projects prioritize community engagement, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative development, necessitating skills in facilitation, intercultural communication, and ethical practice. While both approaches require strong leadership, their focus and methods differ to align with their respective goals and contexts.
3. **Outcomes of Cultural Entrepreneurship and Co-Creation:** The systemic application of cultural entrepreneurship typically yields economic growth, market-driven innovation, and enhanced competitiveness within the cultural sector, aligning with business objectives and market success. In contrast, cultural co-creation projects result in community empowerment, cultural preservation, social cohesion, and collective innovation, focusing on social and cultural outcomes rather than purely economic ones. Both approaches significantly contribute to the cultural landscape in different yet complementary ways, highlighting the importance of balancing economic goals with cultural and social objectives.

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