# STRATEGIC ADAPTATIONS IN CULTURAL MANAGEMENT: ENHANCING ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION IN ROME'S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

*Lavinia Pastore*
lavinia.pastore@unimib.it
*University of Milan-Bicocca*

*Luigi Corvo*
luigi.corvo@unimib.it
*University of Milan-Bicocca*

## Article info

## Abstract

*Purpose.* This study explores the dynamic interplay between organisational resilience and innovation within Rome's cultural and creative industries (CCI) amid significant urban dynamics and cultural policy reforms. The research aims to understand deeper systemic challenges and transformations affecting CCIs and uncover strategies that enhance organisational resilience and foster innovation.

*Design/methodology/approach.* The study employs a mixed-methods approach to synthesise quantitative data from a specially designed questionnaire and derive qualitative insights from 33 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in Rome's CCI. This methodological mix, supported by NVivo software for data integration and analysis, facilitates a holistic understanding of how cultural organisations navigate both longstanding and emergent challenges.

*Findings.* The findings reveal significant organisational agility across Rome's CCIs, with entities exhibiting various degrees of innovation in response to shifting environmental pressures. Their strategic pivot towards more sustainable and resilient operational frameworks challenges traditional views on innovation that are linear and prescriptive.

*Practical and Social Implications.* The study underscores the importance of supportive infrastructure and financial mechanisms in the sustainability and growth of CCIs. Further, it explores how cultural organisations transform these challenges into opportunities for systemic growth and enhancing sectoral vitality, thereby emphasising a nuanced understanding of the complex interdependencies between cultural policy, organisational resilience, and innovation.

*Originality of the study.* This study highlights how adaptive resilience and targeted support can coalesce to foster vibrant and sustainable urban cultural ecosystems and provides a fresh perspective on managing cultural industries through a crisis, emphasising the role of innovation and strategic adaptation in sustaining cultural vitality.

## 1. Introduction

Rome's cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are integral to the city's identity and its economic and social framework. Amid the backdrop of significant urban dynamics and cultural policy reforms, these industries navigate a complex landscape marked by rapid transformation and increased complexity. Understanding these transformations requires a clear conceptual framework for analysing how CCIs operate and evolve within urban environments.

CCIs emerge from the convergence of artistic expression, intellectual property, and economic activity, representing a distinct sector in contemporary urban economies. While traditional economic classifications often struggle to capture their unique characteristics, CCIs are distinguished by their capacity to transform creative and cultural capital into both tangible and intangible outputs. This transformation process operates through multiple channels: direct cultural production, creative service provision, and the generation of intellectual property rights.

The conceptual framework for understanding CCIs has evolved significantly, moving beyond simple industry classifications to recognise their role as complex adaptive systems within urban environments. This evolution reflects a growing recognition that these industries operate through distinctive value-creation mechanisms that combine cultural, social, and economic dimensions. Their operational logic differs from traditional industrial sectors in several key aspects:

1. Value Creation: CCIs generate multiple forms of value simultaneously – cultural, social, and economic – making their output measurement and evaluation distinctly complex.

2. Resource Utilisation: These industries rely heavily on intangible assets, particularly human creativity and cultural knowledge, alongside traditional physical and financial resources.

3. Market Structure: CCIs operate within hybrid market environments where public good characteristics coexist with commercial imperatives, creating unique organisational challenges.

This conceptual understanding is particularly relevant in historically rich contexts where traditional cultural production intersects with emerging creative practices. Rome exemplifies these dynamics, as its cultural organisations must balance heritage preservation with contemporary innovation.

Within this framework, the resilience of Rome's CCIs represents not just survival but strategic adaptation that leverages both traditional and emerg-

ing tools to foster sustainable growth. This study explores these strategies, emphasising the importance of infrastructural and financial support systems, as illuminated by our review of the organisational characteristics and operational challenges derived from an extensive mapping and ontology assessment of the sector. These assessments revealed deep-rooted structures and emergent needs that shape the operational capacities and strategic responses of cultural organisations.

While this study's primary data collection occurred during 2020–2022, a period marked by unprecedented challenges, the transformations observed during this time have proven instrumental in understanding longer-term patterns of adaptation and innovation in Rome's CCIs. The strategic responses developed during this period continue to shape organisational practices and policy approaches, offering valuable insights into the sector's evolving resilience mechanisms and innovation capabilities.

Furthermore, this study extends beyond immediate pandemic-induced disruptions to consider the deeper systemic challenges affecting CCIs and the long-term effects that influence their current evolution. By integrating insights from a comprehensive ontology of the cultural landscape and a nuanced understanding of organisational needs, this study seeks to uncover strategies that bolster resilience and drive innovation, thereby ensuring the sustainability of cultural enterprises in an ever-changing urban milieu.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study synthesised both quantitative and qualitative data, drawing on the rich theoretical landscape of urban resilience and cultural innovation. This analysis aims to enhance the understanding of how Rome's cultural organisations navigate the intricacies of their environment, adapting to both longstanding challenges and the rapid shifts that define modern urban development.


## 2. Theoretical Background

Rome's CCIs are integral to its economic vitality and social cohesion, which seamlessly blends traditional artisanship with contemporary cultural expression. These industries serve as economic drivers and custodians of cultural heritage, highlighting the complex interplay between preserving historical legacies and fostering modern innovation. This dual role positions CCIs as essential elements in shaping urban identity and contributing to the broader social fabric (European Commission, 2018).

A nuanced understanding of CCIs requires an examination of the diverse types of cultural activities within the sector, which are often categorised through a taxonomy that includes traditional arts, digital media, design, and heritage conservation. In Europe and Italy, this taxonomy helps distinguish between various cultural forms, each with its own operational

dynamics, economic models, and developmental needs (UNESCO, 2009). This classification is crucial for developing targeted policies that support the distinct characteristics and challenges of each cultural domain, from commercially oriented creative sectors to public cultural offerings that emphasise accessibility and education (KEA European Affairs, 2006).

The resilience of cultural organisations in Rome is a testament to their ability to adapt to shifting economic and social landscapes. Organisational resilience is not merely about surviving crises but involves strategic innovation and adaptation to changing environments. This adaptability is evident in how cultural entities navigate rapid urban transformations in Rome, while balancing the conservation of heritage with the demands of modernisation. Healy (2002) discussed how cultural organisations adjust to new economic realities, emphasising the role of innovation in sustaining cultural vibrancy. Innovative capabilities are particularly critical, as cultural organisations often face the pressure of maintaining their historical roots while embracing contemporary cultural dynamics.

Innovation in Rome's CCIs is influenced by a combination of necessity and opportunity. The integration of digital technologies and collaborative practices has allowed organisations to expand their reach and engage with diverse audiences. This shift towards digitalisation is part of a broader trend across Europe and Italy, where cultural organisations are increasingly leveraging technology to enhance their offerings and remain competitive in the global market (European Commission, 2020). Li (2020) and Bergamini et al. (2018) emphasise that creativity and innovation are vital for sustaining cultural enterprises, particularly in a digital era which is reshaping the production and consumption of cultural goods.

Cultural entrepreneurship is closely linked to changes in governance models that influence the production and consumption of cultural goods and services. Recent reforms in Rome aim to foster entrepreneurial activities within the cultural sector by adapting governance structures to better support the dynamic nature of cultural production (Council of the European Union, 2019). These changes are reflected in the evolving landscape of cultural funding and policy, which increasingly recognises the need for flexibility and innovation in supporting diverse cultural initiatives.

Community networks and local embeddedness are important for sustainable cultural entrepreneurship. In Rome, these networks facilitate collaboration among stakeholders and ensure responsiveness of cultural initiatives to local needs and sustainability in the long term (Vestrum, 2014; Ben-Hafaïedh et al., 2023). A robust cultural ecosystem benefits from unrestricted ideas and resources, which fosters a collaborative spirit that is essential for resilience and innovation.

However, the growth of the CCI sector is challenging. The "creative class" theory (Florida 2002) is criticised for oversimplifying the relation-

ship between creativity and economic development, often neglecting the socioeconomic inequalities and displacement that accompany CCI-driven urban development. To address these broader socioeconomic impacts, Peck (2005) argues for cultural policies that advocate for a more equitable distribution of the benefits of urban cultural economies.

The theoretical background incorporates insights from academic literature and EU cultural policies to provide a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities within Rome's cultural and creative industries. It emphasises the need for governance models to promote innovation and resilience and address the complex socioeconomic dimensions of urban cultural development to ensure that the sector continues to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

## 3. Methodology

This study utilised a mixed-methods approach to investigate resilience and innovation within Rome's cultural and creative industries (CCI). Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were integrated to capture how these organisations navigate their operational and strategic environments amid evolving urban dynamics. Data were collected using a detailed structured questionnaire and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The participant base was drawn from an extensive database comprising 520 organisations that had engaged with Rome's Department of Cultural Activities and Zetema Project Management.

The study's core data collection phase (2020–2022) captured a critical period of transformation in Rome's CCIs, documenting organisational responses during a time of intense adaptation and innovation. This timing provided a unique opportunity to observe how cultural organisations develop and implement strategic changes under pressure, revealing patterns that continue to influence the sector's development. The database of 520 organisations established during this period serves as a valuable baseline for understanding organisational adaptation and resilience in Rome's cultural sector.

These organisations form a critical part of Rome's cultural ecosystem, characterised by their close interactions with public institutions and reliance on municipal funding mechanisms. To gain insights into the operational strategies and adaptive capacities of these organisations, a survey was distributed to the entire database, with a response rate of approximately 10%, resulting in 49 completed surveys. Although modest, this response rate provides a highly representative snapshot of organisations deeply embedded in the public cultural landscape of Rome.

The survey itself was structured to capture a broad range of informa-

tion regarding the challenges and opportunities faced by these organisations. The first section gathered baseline data related to the organisational characteristics, including size, scope, and primary areas of cultural activity. This allowed for an initial understanding of the diverse operational realities within the sector, ranging from small, locally focused entities to larger organisations with a broader reach across national or even international cultural scenes.

In alignment with the ESSnet-Culture framework, the study focused on key sectors, including performing arts, books and publishing, audiovisual and multimedia, and social promotion associations. These categories were selected to emphasise content creation and cultural output, particularly focusing on activities with direct audience engagement and community impact. Additionally, two new categories were introduced to address innovative production and accessibility: innovation hubs and coworking spaces, and socio-cultural centres, highlighting the role of multifunctional and collaborative spaces in cultural production.

Following this, respondents were asked to provide details on their financial structures, with particular emphasis on their reliance on public funding. This section explored how public funding shaped their operational strategies, long-term planning, and capacity for innovation. The reliance on public funds, while providing financial stability, often limits the flexibility and entrepreneurial spirit of these organisations, an issue that emerged as a central theme in the findings.

The survey also addressed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a critical disruptor for cultural sectors globally. Organisations were prompted to reflect on the specific challenges they encountered during the pandemic, particularly in terms of financial stability and operational continuity. This section explored how cultural entities in Rome responded to the constraints imposed by social distancing measures, with many having to pivot towards digital platforms to maintain audience engagement and continue their programming.

Another important focus of the survey was the exploration of resilience and strategic innovation. Respondents were asked to describe the strategies they adopted to navigate the crisis and ensure long-term sustainability. This included the use of digital tools, the diversification of revenue streams, and the formation of collaborative partnerships with other cultural organisations or public institutions. The responses shed light on the various ways organisations adapted to maintain relevance and operational stability in an uncertain environment.

The final section of the survey examined institutional support and future expectations. Organisations were invited to assess the level of support they received from government institutions and to express their expectations regarding future funding and policy reforms. This provided a criti-

cal perspective on the effectiveness of existing institutional frameworks in supporting the sector's resilience and highlighted areas where further intervention might be needed to ensure the long-term viability of cultural organisations.

To complement the closed sample and capture a broader range of perspectives, an open sample was gathered through a social media campaign conducted across multiple platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram). The campaign targeted cultural organisations in Rome through relevant hashtags, group postings, and organic sharing. This approach resulted in 29 responses from organisations with diverse financial structures and operational models. While this sampling method was inherently random due to the nature of social media engagement, it captured organisations operating outside traditional public funding structures, providing valuable comparative insights into different operational models within Rome's cultural sector. The self-selection nature of this sample, while introducing potential bias, offered authentic perspectives from organisations actively engaged in cultural production but operating independently of municipal funding mechanisms.

Alongside the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 33 representatives selected from the closed sample. Informed by the initial findings from the questionnaires, these interviews followed Saldaña's (2015) qualitative research practices to explore deeper themes.

The interviews began by asking participants to describe their organisational profiles, including their activities, geographic reach, and relationships with local institutions. Participants discussed key challenges they faced, particularly in areas such as management, human resources, financing, and bureaucratic hurdles.

The interviews further explored how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their operations, prompting many to pivot towards digital platforms and rethink their strategies for maintaining audience engagement. Discussions also covered the professional skills most in demand within their organisations and the potential for greater collaboration with other sectors. Digital transformation was highlighted as a crucial tool for innovation, with participants sharing their experiences and insights on the opportunities and challenges of adopting digital tools. Lastly, the interviews touched on gender dynamics in the cultural sector, with participants offering recommendations on addressing gender-related issues through policy reforms.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and trends within the data and provide a quantitative understanding of the operational realities of CCI in Rome. Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically using NVivo software. This analysis involved rigorous coding to identify and categorise emergent themes, accurately reflecting the complex dynamics within cultural sectors.

Stringent ethical guidelines were followed throughout the study. Participants were fully informed about the research objectives, data confidentiality, and their rights concerning voluntary participation.

The study recognises potential limitations, particularly regarding the representativeness of the closed sample. While these organisations benefit from their proximity to public institutions, this reliance on public funding can limit entrepreneurial capacities and lead to project-based activities with less long-term stability. To address this limitation, the inclusion of an open sample provided a broader perspective on the diversity of financial and operational models within Rome's CCI.

By combining structured quantitative methods with rich qualitative interviews, the methodology ensured the study's robustness, comprehensiveness, and suitability for providing meaningful insights into cultural management and policy discourse. These insights reflect the complex interplay between cultural organisations and their urban environments, as discussed by Healy (2002) and Li (2020).

*Table 1: Rome's CCI Sector Classification and Study Sample Distribution*

| Cultural Domain (As per ESSnet-Culture) | Database (N=520) % | Closed Sample (n=49) | Open Sample (n=29) | Interviews (n=33) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Performing Arts | 35 | 12 | 8 | 8 |
| Books and Publishing (Including Libraries) | 15 | 8 | 5 | 5 |
| Social Promotion & Cultural Centres* | 15 | 8 | 5 | 5 |
| Cultural and Natural Heritage | 12 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Visual Arts | 10 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Audiovisual & Interactive Media | 10 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Innovation Hubs, Coworking Spaces* | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Associations of Associations / Networks* | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| ICT | - | - | - | 1 |

*\* Categories extending beyond traditional ESSnet-Culture framework to capture emerging forms of cultural production*

## 4. Findings

This study examines resilience and innovation within Rome's CCIs through a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of data. Our research aimed to uncover how these organisations have navigated the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, their strategic responses, and their broader implications for operational sustainability and growth. The findings were divided into several thematic categories, each addressing a critical aspect of the organisational landscape within the CCI.

*Organisational Characteristics*: The foundational attributes of organisations within the CCI, including their size, scope, and operational reach.

*Impact of COVID-19*: The impact of the pandemic on organisations' operations and finances and their immediate adaptations.

*Resilience and Strategic Innovations*: The long-term strategies that organisations had developed to enhance their resilience and foster innovation.

*Differences Between Closed and Open Samples*: Comparison of the responses and strategies of organisations more closely tied to governmental structures (closed sample) versus those operating more independently (open sample).

*Institutional Support and Future Expectations*: The current level of support received by the organisations from the government and other institutions and their expectations for future support.

This structured approach allows us to methodically dissect the sector's dynamics, providing a granular understanding of how cultural organisations within Rome are shaped by their environment. The subsequent sections delve into each of these categories, presenting a rich tapestry of data that reflects the complex interplay of challenges and opportunities within Rome's CCI.

### 4.1 Organisational Characteristics

The diversity within Rome's cultural and creative industries is reflected in the range of organisations that participated in this study, from small, independent entities to larger, more established institutions. This diversity is crucial for understanding the varying capabilities and challenges faced by these organisations.

The survey data indicates significant differences in operational scope

and size between the closed and open samples. The closed sample, comprising organisations with close ties to government funding and support, generally included entities with larger operational scales and more employees.

*Table 2: Organisational Characteristics*

| Characteristics | Closed Sample (%) | Open Sample (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Local Operation | 65 | 75 |
| National Reach | 25 | 15 |
| International Reach | 10 | 10 |
| Average Employees | 20 | 5 |

*Note: Percentages are illustrative based on survey responses.*

Table 2 illustrates that while the majority of organisations in both samples operate locally, a notable portion of the closed sample has a wider reach, both nationally and internationally. This expanded operational scope is often associated with increased resources and capacity, which influence strategic choices and resilience capabilities.

The qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts provided deeper insights into the organisational culture and ethos that underpin these operational characteristics. For example, themes such as "community engagement" and "organisational mission" were prevalent among smaller organisations, particularly in the open sample, indicating a strong focus on local impact and social values. These qualitative data enrich our understanding of how organisational characteristics influence operational strategies and priorities.

This detailed examination of organisational characteristics sets the foundation for understanding how different types of organisations responded to the pandemic, adapted their strategies, and devised plans. This highlights the importance of considering organisational diversity when designing policies and support mechanisms to aid the sector's recovery and growth.

## 4.2 Impact of COVID-19 and Organisational Responses

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably caused significant disruptions to all sectors, but its impact on Rome's CCIs is particularly profound because they rely on public gatherings and events. The survey and interviews provided a comprehensive view of how these organisations were affected and their immediate responses to mitigate the impact.

The survey data portrays a stark picture of the financial and operational disruptions caused by the pandemic. The vast majority of organisations re-

ported substantial declines in revenue, with many trying to maintain their workforce and operational continuity.

*Table 3: Impact of COVID-19*

| Impact Category | Closed Sample (%) | Open Sample (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Revenue Decrease | 80 | 90 |
| Shift to Digital | 60 | 70 |
| Operational Disruption | 85 | 95 |

*Note: Percentages are illustrative based on survey responses.*

Table 3 shows that while both samples experienced significant impacts, the open sample, which generally comprised smaller and less financially secure organisations, reported a slightly greater revenue decline and operational disruptions. However, both samples demonstrated a substantial shift towards digital platforms, indicating a sector-wide pivot toward online engagement and service delivery in response to lockdown measures and social distancing guidelines.

The qualitative insights from the interviews add depth to the findings. Many organisational leaders considered the rapid transition to digital platforms not only as a temporary fix but also as a broader strategy to diversify their engagement methods and potentially reach a global audience. For example, one interviewee mentioned, "The move to digital technology has opened new pathways for us to reach audiences we never thought possible before. It's become a core part of our strategy now, not just a response to the pandemic."

The qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts highlighted several themes related to resilience and adaptation. Themes such as "digital innovation" and "community support" were frequently mentioned, with many leaders emphasising the role of digital tools in maintaining community engagement and continuing cultural activities despite physical barriers.

This section of the findings reveals the depth of the pandemic's impact along with the dynamism and adaptability of Rome's cultural organisations. The shift to digital technology, while initially a response to an unprecedented crisis, began to reshape operational models within the sector, promoting lasting changes in how culture and creativity are consumed and delivered.

## 4.3 Resilience and Strategic Innovations

As Rome's CCIs were confronted with the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic, their responses evolved into strategic innovations aimed at enhancing long-term resilience. Both the survey and interviews provid-

ed insights into the mechanisms adopted by organisations to survive and potentially thrive in a post-pandemic landscape.

*Table 4: Resilience and Innovation Strategies*

| Strategy | Closed Sample (%) | Open Sample (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Diversified Revenue Streams | 50 | 30 |
| Enhanced Digital Capabilities | 70 | 80 |
| Development of New Business Models | 40 | 60 |

*Note: Percentages are illustrative based on survey responses.*

The survey data indicate a significant embrace of digital capabilities across the sector, with a higher incidence in the open sample. This reflects a broader trend in which smaller, more agile organisations adapt quickly to changing circumstances and leverage technology to open new operational and revenue-generating avenues. The diversification of revenue streams was more pronounced in the closed sample, likely because of their larger structures and greater access to various funding sources, which allowed them to explore different financial strategies without abandoning the traditional ones.

The interview's findings enriched these insights, revealing that the adoption of new business models often involves creative collaboration across sectors and rethinking audience engagement strategies. Many organisations have started leveraging online platforms for content delivery interactive and immersive experiences to expand their reach and deepen audience engagement.

The qualitative analysis highlighted interconnected themes such as "sustainability," "community resilience," and "innovation." Leaders frequently mentioned how fostering a resilient organisation requires a balance between immediate adaptive strategies and long-term sustainability planning. For instance, one leader noted, "Adaptation has become a continuous process. We are always looking for ways to innovate our offerings and engage with our community, ensuring we remain relevant and financially viable."

In addition, the qualitative data showed an association between resilience and community support, with several organisations emphasising the role of local networks and partnerships in navigating crises. These relationships provided moral support along with practical assistance, such as shared resources and joint funding initiatives, which were crucial during the most challenging periods.

This section underscores the adaptive capacity of cultural organisations in Rome, highlighting their ability to integrate new technologies and busi-

ness models into their operations. The strategic innovations adopted are not merely reactive measures but comprise a broader strategy aimed at fostering organisational resilience and ensuring sustainability in a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

The analysis of resilience and innovation strategies reveals important variations by sub-sector and organisational size. For example, performing arts organisations, being more dependent on physical spaces and live audiences, showed different patterns of digital adaptation compared to multimedia and publishing sectors that had existing digital capabilities. Similarly, organisation size influenced the ability to implement strategic innovations - while larger organisations (particularly in the closed sample) had more resources for digital infrastructure, smaller organisations often demonstrated greater agility in adopting new operational models, albeit with resource constraints affecting their sustainability.

## 4.4 Differences Between Closed and Open Samples

The distinctions between the closed and open samples of cultural organisations provide critical insights into how different types of organisations within Rome's CCIs navigate challenges and leverage opportunities. The closed sample primarily comprises organisations having established relationships with government funding bodies and more stable operational frameworks, whereas the open sample includes more independent operating entities, which are often smaller and have less direct access to public funding.

*Table 5: Sample Differences*

| Factor | Closed Sample | Open Sample |
|---|---|---|
| Financial Stability | Higher | Lower |
| Innovation Adoption | Moderate | Higher |
| Dependency on Public Funding | High | Low |

*Note: Descriptive categories based on survey and interview data.*

Table 5 illustrates key operational differences. Financial stability was notably higher in the closed sample, reflecting more consistent access to public funds and larger structural buffers. Conversely, organisations in the open sample, although less financially stable, are often quicker to adopt innovative practices. This agility is partly because of necessity; without the cushion of regular funding, these organisations must be creative in finding new ways to generate revenue and engage audiences.

Interviews with leaders from both samples revealed that while closed-

sample organisations benefit from predictability and security, this can sometimes slow their response to market changes and technological advancements. On the contrary, leaders from the open sample expressed their lack of dependency on public funding, while challenging, has fostered a culture of innovation and flexibility that is crucial in rapidly changing environments.

For instance, one leader from an open-sample organisation mentioned, "Our independence from steady public funding has forced us to be more dynamic and responsive to the community's needs and the digital marketplace. It is tough, but it also drives creativity and rapid adaptation." This sentiment was echoed in the NVivo analysis, where the themes of "independence" and "agility" appeared more prominently in the open sample's responses.

Additionally, the resilience strategies employed differed significantly. Organisations in the closed sample tended to focus on strengthening existing structures and expanding them within their established networks. In contrast, open-sample organisations were more likely to explore new partnerships and cross-sector collaborations to extend their operational horizons and tap into new audience segments.

The differences between the closed- and open-sample organisations underscore the importance of tailored support strategies for policymakers and cultural advocates. For closed-sample organisations, enhancing the flexibility of funding allocations and encouraging innovation within secure frameworks could help them remain competitive and vibrant. For open-sample organisations, increasing access to resources, training, and start-up funding could support entrepreneurial initiatives and stabilise operations.

These insights highlight the dynamic nature of Rome's cultural ecosystem and the need for policies that recognise and adapt to organisational types, considering their specific challenges and strengths. This understanding is crucial to foster a resilient, innovative, and inclusive cultural sector that can thrive during future disruptions.

## 4.5 Institutional Support and Future Expectations

Exploring institutional support and the future expectations of organisations within Rome's CCIs reveals a complex landscape of needs and desires that vary significantly across the sector. The survey data and interviews highlighted both appreciation for existing support and the need for enhancements to meet the evolving demands of these cultural entities.

*Table 6: Institutional Support Feedback*

| Support Quality | Closed Sample (%) | Open Sample (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Satisfactory | 40 | 20 |
| Needs Improvement | 60 | 80 |

*Note: Percentages are illustrative based on survey responses.*

As illustrated in Table 6, satisfaction with current institutional support was notably higher among the closed sample; however, most closed-sample organisations felt that improvements were necessary. This sentiment is even more pronounced in open-sample organisations, in which most organisations find the current level of support to be lacking. These differences reflect varying degrees of engagement and reliance on public funding and support structures between the two groups.

The qualitative analysis revealed several themes that detailed the specific areas where cultural organisations depend on their institutional counterparts. Common requests include more flexible funding arrangements, reduced bureaucracy in the grant application process, and greater inclusivity in policymaking to ensure support for a wider array of cultural activities and organisations.

For example, one interviewee from the open sample stated, "We often find ourselves excluded from larger funding opportunities due to the rigid criteria that favour more established institutions. A more inclusive approach would help bridge this gap and foster a more vibrant cultural landscape."

In addition, the qualitative analysis revealed that organisations across both samples seek support that goes beyond financial assistance. They expressed the need for partnerships that offer strategic advice, technological support, and assistance in expanding their digital presence. These findings suggest growing recognition of the importance of comprehensive support that addresses both immediate financial needs and long-term strategic development.

Regarding the future, organisations expressed a desire for a supportive framework that adapts to the rapid changes in the cultural sector, particularly in terms of digitalisation and global reach. There is a clear expectation of policies that not only react to current trends but also anticipate future developments.

For instance, many leaders emphasised the importance of a "future-proof" support system that considers the increasing demand for digital technology in cultural production and dissemination. They prefer initiatives aimed at technical training, developing digital infrastructures, and supporting innovation in digital content creation.

These expectations reflect a sector that is keenly aware of global shifts in cultural consumption and production and seeks a proactive and forward-thinking approach from institutional supporters. The adaptability to these shifts, supported by robust and responsive policies, is crucial to the sustainability and growth of Rome's CCIs.

Integrating insights from the previous sections, several overarching themes emerged that illustrate the current state and future trajectory of Rome's CCIs. These themes encapsulate the resilience and adaptability of the sector while highlighting the areas where strategic interventions can enhance sustainability and foster innovation.

An analysis of Rome's CCIs revealed that digitalisation has been central to their adaptability and expansion during the pandemic. Organisations across the sector have strategically utilised digital tools to maintain engagement during challenging times while exploring innovative business models that could redefine their future operations.

The study also highlights the significant need for support structures that are more adaptive, inclusive, and capable of meeting the varied needs of diverse cultural organisations. The importance of robust community and network support has been evident, particularly for smaller entities, with organisations relying on these networks to navigate through the disruptions during the pandemic. These relationships are crucial in fostering resilience and encouraging collaborative innovations that benefit broader cultural ecosystems.

Furthermore, there is a marked need for anticipatory and proactive policymaking. Cultural organisations are seeking policies that mitigate current challenges while preparing for future shifts in digital technology and audience engagement. Such forward-looking policies are essential for sustaining the sector's vitality and relevance in a rapidly evolving cultural landscape.

These observations clarify that while Rome's cultural industries are confronted with significant challenges, they are also actively finding ways to adapt and thrive. The sector's dynamic response underscores the need for ongoing support and strategic insights from policymakers, funders, and community stakeholders to foster an environment in which cultural innovation and inclusivity can flourish.

## 4.6 Evolution of Strategic Adaptations

The strategic adaptations observed during 2020–2022 have evolved into established practices that continue to shape Rome's cultural landscape. While initially developed as responses to immediate challenges, many of these innovations have become integral to organisational operations and strategic planning. For example:

- Digital transformation initiatives, initially adopted as emergency measures, have evolved into sophisticated hybrid delivery models
- Collaborative networks formed during the crisis have developed into sustainable partnerships
- Adaptive funding mechanisms have led to more resilient financial models
- Organisational agility, initially a survival response, has become a core competitive advantage

These enduring transformations suggest that the period studied represents not merely a crisis response phase but a catalyst for longer-term strategic evolution in the sector.

## 5. Discussion

The integration of empirical findings with theoretical frameworks in this study reveals complex dynamics between cultural policy, organisational resilience, and innovation within Rome's CCIs. While Florida (2002) posited that a vibrant creative class drives urban innovation and economic growth, our findings present a more nuanced reality. The study reveals that while digitalisation and strategic innovation have indeed catalysed resilience and growth among Rome's cultural organisations, the distribution of these benefits is markedly uneven, supporting Peck's (2005) critique of creative class theory. This uneven distribution manifests primarily in three areas:

1. Digital Infrastructure Access: Organisations with greater resources and established funding channels have leveraged digital tools more effectively, potentially reinforcing existing disparities in cultural participation and production. This digital divide highlights the need for policy interventions that consider the varied capabilities and resources of different organisational types (Bergamini et al., 2018).
2. Innovation Capacity: While digitalisation has emerged as critical for fostering resilience, echoing Healy's (2002) and Howkins' (2002) observations about technology's transformative impact, the ability to implement and maintain digital innovations varies significantly across organisations. Smaller, independent organisations often demonstrate greater agility in adopting new approaches but face resource constraints that limit their ability to fully realise the benefits of digital transformation.

This apparent paradox in digital innovation capabilities – where organisations with fewer resources often showed greater digital agility – can be explained by examining the different pressures and incentives facing organisations. Resource-constrained organisations, particularly in the open

sample, were compelled to rapidly adopt digital solutions as a survival strategy, focusing on low-cost, flexible tools that could be quickly implemented. In contrast, organisations with stable public funding could take a more measured approach to digital transformation, investing in more comprehensive but slower-to-implement solutions. This pattern suggests that innovation in Rome's cultural sector is driven not just by resource availability but by the urgency of adaptation needs and the flexibility of organisational structures.

3. Support System Access: The effectiveness of infrastructural and financial support systems, crucial for nurturing sustainable cultural entrepreneurship (Borin and Delgado, 2018; Aureli et al., 2021), varies across the sector. Our findings indicate that support systems must evolve to become more adaptive and inclusive, accommodating diverse operational models and financial needs to prevent the perpetuation of existing inequalities.

Strategic adaptations within CCIs toward sustainable operational frameworks require a delicate balance between technological advancement and social equity considerations. The successful organisations in our study have achieved this balance through: (a) Development of hybrid delivery models that combine digital and traditional approaches; (b) Formation of collaborative networks that share resources and knowledge; (c) Implementation of flexible funding mechanisms that support both innovation and stability; (d) Cultivation of community-based support systems that enhance local resilience.

These findings align with observations by Vestrum (2014) and Ben-Hafaïedh et al. (2023) regarding the importance of community networks and local embeddedness in fostering resilient cultural ecosystems. However, our study extends this understanding by demonstrating how these networks can actively address inequalities in access to resources and opportunities. The study's findings suggest several key recommendations for policymakers and cultural managers:

1. Governance Structures: Development of frameworks that facilitate rather than obstruct innovation, while ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities.
2. Support Mechanisms: Implementation of flexible funding models that accommodate diverse organisational needs and operational scales.
3. Digital Infrastructure: Creation of shared digital resources and training programs to democratise access to technological tools.
4. Knowledge Networks: Establishment of platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration across different types of organisations.

These recommendations aim to foster a more equitable cultural ecosystem while supporting innovation and resilience. They acknowledge that successful cultural sector development requires attention to both technological advancement and social equity considerations. This analy-

sis contributes to the existing literature on cultural entrepreneurship and resilience by providing empirical evidence of how organisations navigate the tension between innovation and equity in urban cultural settings. It suggests that successful cultural sector development requires policies that explicitly address socioeconomic disparities while fostering technological advancement and organisational innovation.

## 6. Concluding Insights, Limitations, and Strategic Directions

This study provides a detailed exploration of Rome's CCIs and highlights how these organisations navigated the significant disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing challenges (Howkins, 2002). Through a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and interviews, this study illuminated the resilience and innovation strategies that enabled these organisations to adapt and thrive in uncertain times (Healy, 2002).

The main findings underscore the pivotal role of digital transformation, which has emerged as a cornerstone of organisational resilience and innovation within the cultural sector (Florida, 2002). This shift towards digital platforms has facilitated new forms of audience engagement and opened global markets, which were particularly crucial during social distancing norms (Peck, 2005). Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of infrastructural and financial support systems in fostering these adaptations, pointing to the need for policies that are flexible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of various cultural organisations (Borin and Delgado, 2018).

The findings also emphasise the importance of community and network support, which have been instrumental in providing the social and resource-based scaffolding necessary for smaller and more independent organisations to navigate crises. These findings align with current discussions on cultural entrepreneurship, particularly those that advocate a more integrated approach to understanding the socioeconomic impacts of cultural policies (Ben-Hafaïedh et al., 2023).

### 6.1 Limitations of the Study

Although this study offers valuable insights, it has some limitations. The sample size, although sufficiently diverse to provide a range of perspectives, may not have captured all the nuances of Rome's CCIs. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data through surveys and interviews may introduce biases that could affect the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, the rapidly changing nature of the cultural sector, especially in response to ongoing global crises, indicates that findings may require continuous updates to remain relevant (Vestrum, 2014).

This study's theoretical framework, which is built primarily on the dichotomy between Florida's creative class theory and its critiques, may limit the exploration of other potentially relevant theoretical perspectives. Future research could benefit from incorporating more theoretical inputs, especially those that critically examine the implications of digitalisation on cultural diversity and equity in creative industries (Aureli et al., 2021).

Despite these limitations, this study attempts to contribute significantly to the discourse on cultural entrepreneurship and management. It highlights the critical role of adaptive strategies in the sustainability of cultural organisations and offers a framework for policymakers and cultural managers to support these adaptations. The study's findings also enrich the academic and practical understanding of how cultural organisations can leverage technology and community networks to foster resilience and innovation (Bergamini et al., 2018).

*6.2 Evolving Implications and Future Trajectories*

The empirical findings from this study of Rome's CCIs during 2020–2022 illuminate enduring patterns of organisational adaptation that extend beyond the immediate context of the research period. The observed strategic responses provide theoretical insights into how cultural organisations develop resilience mechanisms and innovation capabilities within complex urban environments. These insights contribute to broader theoretical discussions about organisational adaptation in cultural sectors, particularly regarding the relationship between institutional frameworks and innovation capacity.

The analysis reveals several theoretical implications for understanding organisational resilience in cultural sectors. First, the transformation of digital capabilities from crisis response mechanisms to strategic assets suggests a deeper evolution in how cultural organisations conceptualise and operationalise technological integration. This evolution extends beyond mere technological adoption to encompass fundamental changes in organisational learning and capability development, supporting theoretical perspectives on dynamic capabilities in cultural organisations.

Second, the emergence of sustained collaborative networks from crisis-driven partnerships indicates a structural shift in how cultural organisations approach resource allocation and knowledge sharing. This transformation aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasising the role of network effects in organisational resilience while suggesting new dimensions specific to cultural sector dynamics. The study's findings indicate that these networks evolve beyond traditional resource-sharing arrangements to become platforms for collective innovation and strategic adaptation.

The financial adaptations observed during the study period demonstrate the development of more sophisticated approaches to value creation in cul-

tural organisations. These approaches challenge traditional dichotomies between cultural and commercial value, suggesting the emergence of hybrid models that merit further theoretical investigation. This evolution in financial structures raises important questions about the relationship between funding models and organisational innovation capacity in cultural sectors.

These findings have several implications for future research trajectories:

1. The need for longitudinal investigations examining how adaptive capabilities evolve within different institutional contexts.
2. The theoretical implications of emerging hybrid organisational forms in cultural sectors.
3. The relationship between institutional support mechanisms and organisational innovation capacity.
4. The role of digital transformation in reshaping cultural value-creation processes.
5. The impact of cultural innovation on social equity, particularly examining how different groups access and benefit from new cultural initiatives and digital platforms. This research direction is crucial given our findings that technological adoption and innovation capabilities vary significantly across different organisational types and socioeconomic contexts.

Such research directions would contribute to developing more nuanced theoretical frameworks for understanding organisational resilience and innovation in cultural sectors, particularly within complex urban environments like Rome. Furthermore, these investigations could enhance our understanding of how policy frameworks might better support the sustainable development of cultural organisations while preserving their capacity for innovation and adaptation.

The strategic adaptations observed during our study period have evolved in significant ways. Cultural organisations have moved beyond crisis-driven digital adoption to more sophisticated hybrid models combining physical and digital engagement. The initial divide between resource-rich and resource-constrained organisations has begun to shift as collaborative networks and shared digital infrastructure become more common. These developments suggest that the resilience mechanisms identified in our study have become institutionalised features of Rome's cultural landscape rather than temporary adaptations.

### 6.3 Implications and Recommendations

There is a clear need for future studies to explore the long-term effects of the strategic adaptations identified in this study. Longitudinal studies

can provide deeper insights into the sustainability of these changes and their long-term impacts on the cultural sector's economic and social fabric (Pagano et al., 2021). Additionally, comparative studies involving other cities with vibrant cultural sectors could help validate these findings and provide a richer understanding of the cultural entrepreneurship dynamics in urban settings.

The potential of CCIs in Rome to influence similar urban cultural landscapes is immense. By fostering an environment that supports innovation, resilience, and inclusivity, the CCIs can serve as a model for other cities to rejuvenate their cultural sectors. This study's insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Rome's cultural organisations offer valuable lessons for managing and sustaining cultural vitality in urban environments worldwide.

By addressing these challenges and opportunities through thoughtful and evidence-based policies, the cultural sector can become a vital source of economic growth, social cohesion, and artistic innovation. The findings of this study have profound implications for policymakers and cultural management, highlighting the necessity for policies that support the economic dimensions of cultural entrepreneurship and their social and cultural impacts. Recommendations for policy adjustments include the development of more inclusive funding models that accommodate more cultural organisations and support digital infrastructure, which can democratise access to new technologies.

For cultural managers, this study suggests adopting more agile management practices that can quickly adapt to changing market conditions and leverage new technologies to engage audiences. Additionally, there is a pressing need to build and maintain robust community networks that can support cultural organisations through resource sharing and collaborative projects.

Suggestions for future research include exploring the long-term effects of digital transformation on cultural consumption and production, examining the sustainability of new business models, and assessing the impact of cultural policies on socioeconomic equality in urban cultural landscapes.

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