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Paper title

Supporting Arts and Safeguarding Culture: Role of Cooperatives as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

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The culture of cooperation and mutuality requires deeper collaboration between the cooperative movement and the arts and culture sector. The culture of cooperation is designed to build wealth in communities most directly targeted and affected by inequality, helping vulnerable workers build skills and earn income. Despite a strong presence of arts and culture workers in the cooperative sector of the economy—with an estimated 1 in 5 worker-owned businesses in the arts and culture sector in the United States alone—presently there is no comprehensive map of creative cooperatives internationally.

Cultural and creative sectors are an important source of jobs and income with valuable spillovers to the broader economy. They are a driver of innovation, a source of creative and digital skills with strong cross-over into many sectors of the economy and also help other sectors, such as tourism, to grow. In addition to their economic impact, they also have significant social impacts, from supporting health and well-being to promoting social inclusion and local social capital. However, these are often sectors that remain largely undervalued in the policy debate because of the difficulty in assessing their impact, the unique nature of the professions and the often financially precarious situations of persons associated with them (cultural and creative sectors) that characterize them.

The purpose of this research is to study at international level the economic, social, and cultural benefits that cooperatives offer to workers and consumers that are of great impact to the creative and cultural sectors. The paper will present some case study to support the role that cooperatives could play in the cultural and creative sectors, but the final goal of the research is to map the current state of play of cooperatives in safeguarding in/tangible cultural heritage, as well as the status and potential in the creative sectors.