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Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Cultural Development in Kyrgyzstan: The Case Study of the Kuduk Foundation

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the Kuduk Foundation, a social entrepreneurship model in Kyrgyzstan that aims to promote culture and build intercultural ties across the country. Kyrgyzstan is a multiethnic country situated in Central Asia. All other Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan also host hundreds of different ethnic and cultural minorities. In the territories of Central Asian countries, ethnic clashes sometimes occurred for various reasons. The Central Asian region is less conflict-prone; however, interstate clashes among cultural and ethnic groups have occurred over economic, cultural, and political issues, especially over territorial disputes. That's why promoting cultural exchange and cultural diversity, and celebrating differences, are crucial in the region and in Kyrgyzstan. Our main research question is: How does social entrepreneurship advance the country's cultural development? Our research uses *social entrepreneurship theory* to clarify the concept and analyze the local case of the Kuduk Foundation. Our methodology is *a case study*, based on a semi-structured interview with the foundation's founder, conducted specifically for this research, and an analysis of open sources.

KEYWORDS: Culture, Social Entrepreneurship, Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, Kuduk Foundation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Culture is defined as the shared values, norms, and practices of a society (House et al, 2004). Culture is increasingly considered a cross-cutting and significant element of sustainable development, a resource that affects all key areas of public life and can drive comprehensive, systemic change. Culture has a tangible impact on quality of life, levels of social cohesion, and the resilience of local communities. Cultural practices, whether participation in artistic initiatives, the preservation of intangible heritage, or the creation of new forms of self-expression, play an important role in empowering citizens, especially young people (UNESCO, 2022). Culture helps people embrace diversity, shape visions of a desired future, and actively participate in building it. Culture is about the living environment in which ideas, values, and development models emerge and can transform society. Nevertheless, despite the growing recognition of culture's role, it remains insufficiently integrated into sustainable development strategies. According to UNESCO (2022), only 13% of national reviews on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals explicitly acknowledge the cross-cutting significance of the Goals. These points are not so much a lack of interest in culture as the need for its systematic integration into development policy and practice. In the context of global crises and social instability, culture and the arts are uniquely positioned to serve as a connective force between people, strengthening a sense of belonging, broadening perspectives, and creating conditions for a more inclusive and sustainable future. Supporting and developing cultural initiatives, especially at the local level, should therefore be seen not as a secondary concern but as a strategic priority directly linked to social well-being, trust, and resilience.

Kyrgyzstan occupies a distinctive place within this discourse, as cultural diversity and artistic practices are closely intertwined with questions of identity, social cohesion, and sustainable development. The country possesses a rich historical and artistic heritage and is home to more than eighty ethnic groups (World Population Review, n.d.), each contributing to the formation of a shared cultural space. This diversity creates unique opportunities for intercultural dialogue, while simultaneously necessitating systematic efforts to strengthen cultural identity and civic integration. Alongside this, contemporary art is actively developing in the country: young artists, musicians, filmmakers, and curators play an important role in interpreting social change, preserving memory, and shaping new visions of the future. The importance of culture is also reflected in official discourse. As President Sadyr Japarov noted in his address to cultural and arts practitioners, "culture influences the upbringing and aesthetic formation of the individual,

motivates creativity and exploration. Through it, spiritual values, traditions, and a sense of patriotism are formed" and further emphasized that culture "has always been and remains the foundation of the country's social, political, and economic life" (24.kg, 2020). These statements reflect recognition of culture and the arts as integral components of national development. The Public Foundation "Kuduk Cultural Center" is an organization operating in the field of culture and the arts in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Since its establishment, the foundation has developed projects to support young cultural practitioners, strengthen regional communities, and build cultural infrastructure.

Our main research question is: How does social entrepreneurship advance the country's cultural development? Our research uses *social entrepreneurship theory* to clarify the concept and analyze the local case of the Kuduk Foundation. As a social enterprise, Kuduk implements educational programs in arts management, provides small grants, and creates platforms for creative exchange. At the same time, the foundation seeks not only to deliver individual projects but to cultivate a sustainable ecosystem in which culture and the arts play a meaningful role in public life. A distinctive feature of the Kuduk Foundation is its use of social entrepreneurship tools. Recognizing the limitations of grant-based funding, the foundation's team has developed a hybrid model in which cultural initiatives are supported through internally generated income streams. This approach enables simultaneous nurturing of the cultural environment, achieving partial financial independence, and preserving a strong social orientation. Our methodology is a case study, based on a semi-structured interview with the foundation's founder, Diana Rakhmanova, conducted specifically for this research and an analysis of open sources.

II. Analysis/Discussion

About the Kuduk Public Foundation

The *Kuduk Public Foundation* is an independent non-profit organization operating in the fields of culture, the arts, and practice-oriented educational initiatives. The idea for establishing the foundation belongs to artist, journalist, and arts manager Diana Rakhmanova. Beginning in 2013, she implemented various cultural initiatives in Bishkek, aiming to create a space to support independent artists and strengthen the cultural sector in the country and the region. These initiatives laid the groundwork for the foundation, which was officially registered in 2021. Since its establishment, Kuduk has grown from a local project into a recognized regional platform operating across Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Over time, Kuduk has become an active and visible participant in the region's cultural life. Today, the foundation implements large-scale interregional projects and actively engages arts managers, curators, activists, and professionals from the creative industries in its programs. It serves as a bridge between emerging cultural practitioners and broader institutional and international environments, providing access to education, professional development, and resources to help them implement their own projects (Interview with Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

As a social enterprise, the foundation's core mission is to promote sustainable social development through culture and the arts. Kuduk views culture not merely as a sphere of aesthetic production, but as a tool for social transformation capable of strengthening local communities, fostering dialogue, and supporting the values of inclusion and self-expression. The organization seeks to engage young people in cultural life, develop professional competencies in arts management, and build sustainable cultural infrastructure, particularly in regions where it is most vulnerable. The foundation's activities aim to expand access to cultural practices, strengthen interregional ties, and create spaces for collaboration and exchange among the cultures of Central Asia. The foundation's main areas of work include implementing educational programs, organizing cultural events, and supporting independent, author-driven art projects. Kuduk conducts training, workshops, thematic events, and small grant competitions for representatives of the creative industries. In addition, the foundation incorporates elements of social entrepreneurship, striving for financial sustainability and reduced dependence on donor funding. This approach enables a strong social mission to be combined with economic autonomy, reinforcing Kuduk's position as an independent cultural platform (Interview with Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

Key Projects and Non-Profit Activities of the Foundation

The organization develops and implements a wide range of programs, including educational initiatives, support for local cultural communities, interdisciplinary projects, and sustainable art infrastructure development. All of these areas are united by a shared commitment to developing culture as an important public resource that can strengthen social ties, unlock the potential of young cultural practitioners, and foster sustainable development. Despite the diversity of formats, the foundation's approach remains consistent: Kuduk builds long-term initiatives rooted in local contexts, interregional cooperation, and attention to socially significant issues. One of the key areas of work is an educational platform aimed at young professionals and activists in the cultural sector. The flagship project in this direction is the "Laboratory for Cultural Leaders of Central Asia", a program focused on developing the professional competencies of arts managers, curators, and organizers of cultural initiatives. The program brings together participants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, offering opportunities for education, mentorship, and grant support. Participants complete both in-person and online modules, develop their own projects, and present the results at a final public showcase. This initiative contributes to the formation of a sustainable network of cultural professionals, the development of cross-border

collaboration within the region, and the search for new models of cultural leadership grounded in local specificity (Kuduk Foundation Instagram page, 2025).

The foundation implements a small-grants program to support local initiatives in the regions of Kyrgyzstan. This program is designed for experienced cultural practitioners and focuses on strengthening local cultural infrastructure, including cultural centers, libraries, museums, and other venues. Examples of successfully implemented projects include "Er-Toshtuk: Legends of the Past," which reinterprets the Kyrgyz epic through contemporary art, and "By the Piece," a project dedicated to researching and visualizing the mosaic heritage of Osh. These projects not only revitalized important elements of cultural memory but also attracted new audiences, fostering dialogue about heritage, its vulnerability, and its relevance in contemporary contexts. Within the framework of the **"EcoArt"** series, the foundation organized training and public events dedicated to the greening of the cultural sector. Artists, managers, researchers, and activists participated in discussions on sustainable futures through art and creative approaches. These projects demonstrate that Kuduk goes beyond traditional cultural forms, transforming culture into a tool for social reflection and practical action (Interview with Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

Social Entrepreneurship and Culture: Kuduk Foundation

We use theories of *social entrepreneurship* to analyze the case of the Kuduk Foundation, with a mission to develop culture in Central Asia. Social entrepreneurship directs its actions towards producing benefits for numerous members of society through collective effort. Social entrepreneurship creates both private and public value, and when private resources are used to achieve public goods, it solves public problems (Piecu et al. 2024). Social entrepreneurship is not a well-defined concept, and different regions and countries define it differently. Some authors define it as an entrepreneurship that aims to achieve social change, address social problems, and create a better world (Teasdale et al., 2023). Brownell et al. (2025) define "social entrepreneurship as engaging in altruistic, ecological, or communal opportunities through social provisioning and focusing on activities motivated by societal needs". Pounder (2021) defined social entrepreneurship as "not-for-profits with social intent and hybrid social enterprises with either an economic or a socially-oriented intent". Using social entrepreneurship opportunities through culture is "a viable approach to uncovering and understanding community needs" (Barresi, 2024). Social entrepreneurship is directed to achieve a specific mission, and this mission can be cultural as well. Especially in a multicultural country like Kyrgyzstan, where social cohesion, cultural diversity, and the promotion of the cultures of the nations and minorities are crucial. Kyrgyzstan faced many inter-ethnic conflicts in its territories since 1991, where different ethnics due to some issues clashed, and sometimes it led to bloody conflicts, like in the South of Kyrgyzstan in 1990 and in 2010. Kyrgyzstan faced not only internal conflicts but also interstate conflicts, such as with Tajikistan in 2021 and 2022, over territorial issues (Turgunbaeva, 2025).

In conditions of limited and unstable grant funding, the Kuduk Foundation consistently develops a social-entrepreneurial model that enables the organization to achieve greater financial independence without abandoning its cultural and educational mission. This model is based on the principle of combining socially significant goals with sustainable economic instruments and aims to create an environment in which cultural initiatives can not only develop but also sustain themselves. Within this strategy, the foundation develops its own cultural infrastructure that simultaneously fulfills both programmatic and entrepreneurial functions. In particular, a foundation-run coworking center in Bishkek hosts lectures, workshops, film screenings, and other events that support the development of creative industries and informal education. The space is open to representatives of the cultural sector, initiative groups, and educational communities, making it an important platform for exchanging knowledge, ideas, and experience. At the same time, space rental, the sale of related services, and event organization generate additional income, which is reinvested to support the overall sustainability of the foundation's activities (Interview with Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

Within the coworking space, a bar and a merchandise shop also operate, serving as an additional element of integrating entrepreneurial logic into the cultural ecosystem. The bar serves not only as a social space for event participants but also as an independent draw, where people can meet informally, discuss projects, or relax after the event. The shop offers original merchandise reflecting local cultural symbolism, artworks, and souvenirs connected to the foundation's activities and those of its partners. These components enrich the space's cultural atmosphere while also generating an independent source of income, allowing the foundation to finance part of its programs through its own resources. This approach enables the foundation to strengthen its institutional sustainability, reduce dependence on external funding, and plan long-term initiatives more freely. Social entrepreneurship, as practiced by the foundation, is not merely a way to generate income but a form of expressing its organizational philosophy, in which culture is understood as a value that can be both socially meaningful and economically viable (Interview with Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

As part of the expansion of this model, in the spring of 2025, the foundation opened a new multifunctional space, the DARI art café. This project became the next step in the development of social entrepreneurship, combining gastronomy, culture, and economic sustainability. The following section provides a more detailed description of this initiative. DARI combines the functions of a café, an educational platform, and an art residency. From its first days, the space has regularly hosted music evenings, workshops, exhibitions, and culinary sessions aimed not only at rethinking cultural traditions but also at attracting new audiences. Through accessible formats, the foundation seeks to cultivate a habit of participating in cultural life among city residents, challenging the

perception of art as an elitist sphere. A distinctive feature of DARI is that it simultaneously serves as a venue for the foundation's own events and as an open platform for external initiatives. Young artists, curators, musicians, activists, and researchers can use the café's infrastructure to implement their own projects. This approach transforms DARI from a simple point of sale or exhibition space into a lively, flexible, and constantly evolving cultural hub. It fosters a community united by an interest in meaningful leisure, creative exchange, and new forms of local cultural identity. A special role in DARI's activities is to promote Tajik cultural heritage. The central idea of the space, as well as of the foundation's overall work, is cultural exchange that brings together gastronomy, art, and intercultural interaction. DARI also hosts creative workshops dedicated, for example, to making traditional Tajik hair ornaments (kokuls) and dolls (lukhtaki), which have been the focus of recent sessions. These initiatives strengthen interest in regional traditions and create conditions for soft cultural diplomacy. In this context, social entrepreneurship acts as a link between commercial mechanisms and the cultural mission, enabling them to coexist effectively. DARI not only generates additional income but also helps expand the foundation's audience, strengthen intercultural ties, and contribute to the city's cultural environment. Like any new endeavor, this initiative faces challenges while simultaneously opening up new opportunities. The challenges and potential associated with developing this model will be discussed in the following chapters (Interview with Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

The development of cultural initiatives with social-entrepreneurial elements in Kyrgyzstan is associated with a number of complex challenges. For the Kuduk Foundation, which already has experience implementing entrepreneurial formats, such as a coworking center, a bar, and a merchandise shop, the opening of the DARI art café was a particularly important milestone. This project expanded the scale of social entrepreneurship practices and presented the team with new tasks to identify a sustainable model that integrates cultural, gastronomic, and economic components. In these conditions, the organization faces numerous internal and external barriers. These relate both to systemic limitations within the cultural sector and to the specifics of commercial activity in the food and beverage industry. Operating at the intersection of the creative economy and business, Kuduk is forced to seek a daily balance between its social mission, high-quality content, and financial viability. One of the most fundamental constraints lies in the very nature of the cultural sector. The experience of the DARI art café shows that developing culture as a sustainable economic practice is difficult, especially under conditions of limited purchasing power and a strong dependence of the commercial component on public interest. One of the café's sources of income remains cultural events, workshops, exhibitions, music evenings, and thematic meetings, some of which are ticketed. However, a model that generates revenue through ticket sales and participation fees does not always provide predictable, stable income. The success of cultural formats depends on many external factors, from seasonality and media coverage to the overall state of the economy and audience engagement. This situation requires the team to constantly balance creative ambitions with economic realism. "It is difficult to develop the sphere of culture and art here, especially when we are talking about a direction where we depend on ticket sales…" (Interview with Diana Rakhmanova, Founder of the Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

In addition, opening a new cultural space with social entrepreneurial elements is always a complex and resource-intensive process, especially in a highly competitive and unstable sector such as food service. At the initial stage, challenges typical of any young enterprise are felt particularly acutely: a heavy workload for the team, the need for substantial time and resource investments, an unstable customer flow, and difficulties establishing consistent service and logistics. All of this creates fragility and heightened sensitivity to organizational disruptions, from supply chain issues to administrative processes (Interview with Diana Rakhmanova, Founder of the Kuduk Foundation, 2025). One of the most acute problems the foundation's team faces during the formative stage of DARI remains staffing. Managing a café requires a stable operational process in which each employee plays a key role. However, given the country's limited human resources and intense competition in the food service sector, recruiting qualified chefs, baristas, administrators, and service staff is a serious challenge. Staff turnover, a shortage of specialists, and difficulties in building a stable team limit the opportunity for systematic growth and reduce managerial predictability. At the same time, these difficulties help the foundation better understand market demands, develop staffing strategies, and adapt its model to real. Against this backdrop, the issue of forming a team oriented not only toward professional duties but also toward sharing the project's values becomes particularly acute. Social entrepreneurship requires not just discipline, but engagement, the ability to see a broader goal behind daily routines: the development of the cultural environment and the strengthening of social ties. "It's very rare to find someone who will immerse themselves in your idea… and they will never care about your project the way you do." (Interview with Diana Rakhmanova, Founder of the Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

Equally significant, in conditions of limited resources and a high workload on key team members, is emotional burnout, one of the least visible yet most destructive factors affecting the sustainability of a young social business. This problem is especially acute for founders, who bear the main managerial and operational responsibilities. They set the direction, maintain the integrity of the project, inspire the team, and make critical decisions in unstable conditions. At the same time, constant productivity expectations, a high degree of personal involvement, and the inability to "step away" from the process create chronic emotional strain. Any mistake, delay, or overload affects not only work efficiency but also their internal state. In such conditions, burnout becomes not merely an individual difficulty but a risk to the entire organization's sustainability. Especially in social projects, where work relies

not only on professional but also on value-based motivation, the loss of energy among founders can demotivate the team, slow development, and undermine faith in the mission (Interview with Diana Rakhmanova, Founder of the Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

All of the challenges described above form a multilayered, realistic picture of the conditions in which the Kuduk Foundation conducts its social and cultural activities. They clearly show that social entrepreneurship is not a simplified alternative to donor-based models, but a demanding form of work that requires managerial flexibility, emotional maturity, and the ability to make strategic decisions in an unstable environment. By overcoming difficulties, the team not only stays the course but also gradually accumulates experience that strengthens the project and enables it to move forward more consciously. At the same time, the foundation has important resources that open space for new opportunities and rethinking, some of which become real points of growth.

Development Opportunities of the Kuduk Foundation

Despite the operational difficulties associated with launching and developing the DARI art café, the Kuduk Foundation demonstrates flexibility and strategic thinking that allow it not only to respond to challenges but also to build pathways for growth. By combining a cultural mission with an entrepreneurial approach, the foundation's team is developing a working model in which development potential arises from both the project's internal dynamics and favorable opportunities in the external environment. One of the key internal factors is an organized and systematic approach to management. The team is already establishing processes to maintain stability and support informed decision-making. Strategic planning, regular discussions of current tasks, basic monitoring, and the accumulation of working observations are used to navigate changing conditions. These elements of managerial culture allow the team to respond flexibly to challenges, adjust the development vector, identify growth areas, and gradually improve the quality of work by using available resources more effectively. Alongside internal organization, legal and financial transparency play an important role. The foundation's team strives to minimize risks, simplify control, and ensure the reliability of operational activities. A predominant shift to cashless payments helps systematize accounting and reduce the likelihood of financial disruptions. Compliance with legal norms and transparent financial reporting helps prevent legal complications and forms a solid foundation for further development. The next strengthening element of the DARI model is the cross-integration of cultural and gastronomic components. This approach reflects the foundation's deliberate strategy to expand and diversify its audience. Visitors to cultural events discover ethnic cuisine, while café guests engage with the cultural program through exhibitions, workshops, and creative evenings. This intertwining of formats increases engagement and fosters a community around the space. At the intersection of taste, art, and meaning, the foundation's ability to adapt DARI to diverse interests and strengthen it as a living cultural ecosystem becomes evident (Interview with Diana Rakhmanova, Founder of the Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

Alongside internal mechanisms, community support plays a significant role. A space created at the intersection of cultural mission and gastronomic format quickly gained recognition thanks to its social significance and authenticity. DARI does not simply offer food or events; it addresses cultural tasks: making art accessible, preserving and popularizing the heritage of different countries, and bringing people together around values of diversity and mutual respect. This is what generates trust and loyalty: not only long-standing participants of the foundation's initiatives return, but also new guests who find deep, human meaning in the project. In this way, community support becomes not only a reflection of the project's value but also an important resource for its future. *"People were waiting for the opening of our space, people are coming… our audience has actually expanded"* (Interview with Diana Rakhmanova, Founder of the Kuduk Foundation, 2025).

Thus, despite the project's youth and the many external and internal constraints, DARI is gradually strengthening as an independent cultural space with its own character, a sustainable development logic, and clear social value. The reliability of this initiative is built not on a single strong advantage but on a combination of factors: strategic management, transparent practices, a flexible model of audience interaction, and genuine community trust. Together, these elements create a solid foundation on which the Kuduk Foundation builds its own version of social entrepreneurship in the cultural sector. The story of the DARI art café is not merely a local experiment, but a unique experience filled with reflection, trial and error, discovery, and resilience. It is of interest to a wide audience and offers deeper insight into what a sustainable cultural project can look like in conditions of instability and high social significance.

III. CONCLUSION

The story of the DARI art café, as one of the Kuduk Foundation's key projects, offers a fresh perspective on the possibilities and limitations of social entrepreneurship in Kyrgyzstan's cultural sector. DARI has evolved into a space where ways of combining a cultural mission, social significance, and economic viability are tested in practice. Under conditions of limited resources, fragmented cultural policy, and high uncertainty, the team balances daily between inspiration and survival, between the desire to preserve the original idea's depth and the need to ensure financial sustainability. This experience highlights that viable cultural projects require mature management, strategic thinking, and a constant willingness to learn.

DARI also illustrates the specific nature of social entrepreneurship as a financial tool for cultural initiatives. Unlike classical commercial models focused on profit maximization, such projects operate according to a logic of dual value: on the one hand, they generate income that helps cover costs and reduces dependence on donors; on the other hand, they maintain a strong focus on social and cultural missions. For the Kuduk Foundation, this means a transition from project-based thinking to institutional sustainability, in which every source of income, whether from the café, workshops, or merchandise, is embedded within a shared philosophy. This approach requires careful attention to internal processes: staff management, team building, financial control, and the quality of interaction with audiences. DARI is not simply a café with artistic elements, but a meaningful environment with symbolic weight, capable of generating income while supporting the foundation's long-term presence in the city's cultural landscape.

The experience of the Kuduk Foundation shows that financial sustainability in the cultural sector is possible when social entrepreneurship is treated not as a side activity, but as a core strategic element. In the context of unstable external funding and limited demand for cultural services in Kyrgyzstan, the foundation has developed a hybrid model that combines social goals with entrepreneurial tools. DARI does not abandon the cultural component but uses the café format as a channel for generating sustainable income and expanding its audience. This approach provides not only a means of survival but also a foundation for planning, developing new directions, and reducing vulnerability to external fluctuations. It confirms that, with a well-designed strategic architecture, culture can not only require support but also generate economic value.

One of the most revealing lessons from DARI's history is the team's role as the primary resource. In social entrepreneurship, especially in the cultural sphere where much depends on personal motivation and value-based engagement, it is the team that shapes the style, atmosphere, and level of trust from the outside world. The experience of the Kuduk Foundation shows that staff stability is not a secondary issue, but a key factor in survival. Without people genuinely invested in the mission, even the most well-designed model cannot withstand internal pressure. At the same time, an equally serious risk is not the absence of a team, but the exhaustion of those who remain. When the team is small, and the scope of tasks is large and diverse, the workload becomes unevenly distributed. Under conditions of limited resources, emotional burnout turns into a systemic threat. The story of DARI confirms that even with high motivation and deep personal involvement, exhaustion can slow development, reduce the quality of decision-making, and undermine internal cohesion. Caring for the well-being of key people is not an option, but a mandatory element of sustainable management. Social entrepreneurs must consider not only the business model, but also the management of emotional load, monitoring overload, burnout, and recovery points.

Another crucial resource is the project's value base. In the case of DARI, it is precisely the social and cultural mission that serves as the connecting link between the space and its audience. People come not only for food or events, but because they find in this place a reflection of their views, interests, and desire for meaningful interaction. This stance fosters trust and loyalty: visitors become not just consumers, but co-participants. This is especially important at a stage when the economic model is not yet fully established. Sustained interest from the community demonstrates that cultural entrepreneurship works when it is driven not merely by calculation, but by an honest idea. This trust becomes an invisible yet strategically important asset, without which it is impossible to build a viable ecosystem.

Social entrepreneurship in culture is not a universal recipe, but a living practice. There are no ready-made algorithms, and every managerial decision requires a balance between idea and reality, mission and resources, inspiration and accountability. The higher the value-based ambition, the greater the risk of collision with everyday realities. Thus, the key skill becomes the ability to maintain this balance without losing depth while also avoiding neglecting pragmatism. Sustainability emerges not only from inspiration but from maturity, precision, and the ability to change without losing meaning. The story of DARI is not simply the implementation of a project, but a profound practical experience where strategy, values, and organizational dynamics intertwine. It shows that sustainability in cultural initiatives does not arise automatically and does not depend on a single strong idea. It is built gradually through managerial decisions, care for the team, openness to change, and strong connections with the community. It is precisely this multilayered, "hand-crafted" construction that makes a project alive and meaningful. For researchers, practitioners, and anyone considering the future of culture under conditions of instability, the experience of DARI can serve not as a formula but as a source of observation and reflection on how real sustainability takes shape when ideas, the environment, and everyday work come together.

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