

Cultural Entrepreneurship and Handicrafts: the case of the Central Markets of Aracaju

Empreendedorismo Cultural e Artesanato: o caso dos Mercados Centrais de Aracaju

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Resumo

O empreendedorismo cultural vem consolidando-se como campo de estudos e, nesta pesquisa, está associado à produção de artesanato como prática cultural. O objetivo deste artigo é compreender a relação entre empreendedorismo cultural e artesanato, avançando na perspectiva da construção simbólica da prática artesanal. Para tanto, foram tomados como objeto de estudo os Mercados Centrais de Aracaju, espaços de apresentação da cultura sergipana, adequados para esta pesquisa. Usando abordagem qualitativa, foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com comerciantes de artesanato dos mercados e artesãos fornecedores, para entender a visão deles sobre empreender por meio da cultura, material estudado pela análise da narrativa. Registros fotográficos e observação direta também foram utilizados. Os achados apontaram que os comerciantes dos mercados participam da cadeia de disseminação da cultura do artesanato sergipano nos mercados - mas sem produzirem efetivamente - e na manutenção dos laços culturais. Concluiu-se que no âmbito do empreendedorismo cultural, o artesanato tem um grande potencial para empreendedor como atividade cultural, sob um enfoque na criatividade e na inovação, aperfeiçoando o trabalho do artesão e mantendo seu caráter simbólico. Mesmo assim, há carência de ações nos mercados que estabeleçam o reconhecimento dos artesãos enquanto empreendedores culturais e guardiães de uma cultura secular.

Palavras-chave: empreendedorismo cultural; artesanato; Mercados Centrais de Aracaju.

Abstract

Cultural entrepreneurship has been consolidated as a field of study and, in this research, this concept was associated with the production of handicrafts as a cultural practice, in the context of municipal markets of Aracaju and producer workshops in Santana do São Francisco/SE. The aim was to investigate the practices of artisans, the dynamics of craft trade and its production, associated with cultural entrepreneurship. Using a qualitative and exploratory approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted, based on narrative analysis, with craft traders from the markets and artisan suppliers, as well as photographic records and direct observation. The findings showed that market traders participate in the chain of dissemination of craft culture, but without entering into the production process and maintaining the cultural ties that permeate the creation of a piece, which is the role of the artisan. It was concluded that there is a lack of actions to recognise artisans as entrepreneurs and guardians of a centuries-old culture.

Keywords: Cultural Entrepreneurship; Craftsmanship; Central Markets.

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1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship can be defined as the attempt to provoke, through individual or collective action, the emergence of new economic, social, institutional and cultural means (Campos, 2021). This concept is closely related to culture (Dimaggio, 1982; Davel & Cora, 2016; Marins & Davel, 2020), which forms the values that direct a community's activities (Julien, Marchesnay & Machado, 2010). Culture can direct these activities towards cultural production, based on the symbolic nature of its products, thus fostering entrepreneurial practice (Guerra & Paiva Júnior, 2015). Therefore, cultural entrepreneurship can be understood as a confluence between entrepreneurship and culture, which has been established as a field of study within the area of entrepreneurship (Hausman & Heinze, 2016; Essig, 2017; Araujo & Barbosa, 2019; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2019). Despite the consolidation process (Loy & Ageson, 2018), understanding the singularities of entrepreneurship in culture and arts requires a better understanding in order to boost studies on cultural entrepreneurship (Göleç & Maksudunov, 2019; Neves & Davel, 2021).

Academic production on cultural entrepreneurship has grown in recent decades (Chang, Potts & Shih, 2021; McMullen, Ding & Li, 2021). Studies include the importance of the topic in materialising symbolic and economic capital (Townley & Gullede, 2015); on creativity and innovation (Hausmann & Heinze, 2016); as well as reflecting cultural entrepreneurship as an instrument for entrepreneurial action through cultural and social values (Lange, 2018); and incorporating research in the public sector for the development of public policies (Brooks, Vorley & Gherhes, 2022; Fazlagić, Sulczewska-Remi & Loopesko, 2021). However, little has been discussed about cultural entrepreneurship from the perspective of artistic logics (Marins & Davel, 2020), especially the spaces/organisations (Petrova, 2018) where arts are presented and constituted, such as markets, which are considered environments of cultural familiarity and identity (Canclini, 1983).

In the context of this research, the concept of craftsmanship is presented as an aspect of identity, which is configured as a manual form of art and a possible means of income for the communities involved (Castilho, Dorsa, Santos & Oliveira, 2017). Craft practices are closely linked to culture and have a symbolic character for all stakeholders in the process, whether consumers of craft product or the artisans themselves (Beling, Fantineli, Cancelier & Vargas, 2020).

The objects of this study were the markets Thales Ferraz and Antônio Franco, located in the centre of Aracaju, the capital of the Brazilian State of Sergipe. These markets are characterised as an important cultural and tourist environment for the State, as they bring together various practices related to culture, especially handicrafts (Leite, 2019). Therefore, municipal markets are an important environment for bringing value to practices related to cultural entrepreneurship. Based on the initial findings, the research was directed towards the problem of the present study: What is the relationship between cultural entrepreneurship and handicrafts from the perspective of the symbolic construction of the handicraft practice?

In this context, the course of the work specifically involved getting to know the space where the primary field of research is located: the Central Markets; understanding the entrepreneurial logic between the dynamics of the handicraft trade and its production: who only makes it, who makes it and sells it, who only sells it, and where these relationships are established. The secondary field of the exploratory research focused on the space where handicrafts are produced - the city of Santana do São Francisco, always bordering aspects of cultural entrepreneurship.



This research is justified by the scarcity of material that addresses the relationship between cultural entrepreneurship and handicrafts (Machado, 2013; Davel & Cora, 2016; Castilho *et al.*, 2017), as well as the importance of bringing value to the cultural aspects of the people of Sergipe through greater visibility.

Given these aspects, in order to analyse relevant studies on the subject, a search was carried out in Capes journals using the keywords "Cultural Entrepreneurship", "Cultural Entrepreneurship and Crafts" and "Entrepreneurship, culture and crafts", with a reference period of 5 years considering studies in the area of Applied Social Sciences that could contain any of the terms mentioned. The first keyword indicated a total of 70 articles, the second 5 articles and the third 30 articles were found.

Analysing the abstracts, objectives, methodologies and research results for the keyword "Cultural Entrepreneurship", of the 70 studies indicated, only 1 work showed a specific relationship with the topic under analysis, the title of which was "Trends and opportunities for entrepreneurs in the Amapá handicraft sector" (Santana *et al.*, 2023). In the search for the second keyword, 1 of the 5 articles presented was related to the topic under study, with the same title as mentioned above. For the third keyword, of the 30 articles listed, only 1, entitled "Arts and Crafts: For the Promotion of an Ecosystem of Culture, Knowledge, and Entrepreneurship" (Leon, Torre & Ramirez, 2020), showed any relation to the present study.

The aim of this article is to understand the relationship between cultural entrepreneurship and handicrafts from the perspective of the symbolic construction of the craft practice. The methodology follows a qualitative and exploratory approach, with semi-structured interviews with craft market traders and artisan suppliers to understand their vision of cultural entrepreneurship, as well as photographs and direct observation. The material from the interviews was analysed using narrative analysis. As a contribution, an integrated understanding of the relationship between cultural entrepreneurship and handicrafts was drawn up and discussed. In addition, the work presents an overview of the interviewees' commercial activities and their challenges.

2 Entrepreneurship and culture: an important relationship

For Campos (2021, p. 245), entrepreneurship is "the effort to create new economic, social, institutional and cultural environments, through several individuals or just one individual". According to Carvalho *et al.* (2017, p. 634), "entrepreneurship is an economic, cultural, psychological and sociological phenomenon linked to the emergence of new business prospects". It is worth highlighting the concept presented by Lounsbury and Glynn (2001), who conceive entrepreneurship as being part of the cultural and symbolic domain. From the point of view of these concepts, the presence of culture can be seen as an integral part of the concept of entrepreneurship.

Therefore, entrepreneurship cannot be only associated with the process of establishing companies (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Julien, Marchesnay & Machado, 2010). For Machado (2013), entrepreneurship is a multidisciplinary field which should be joined with the fields of administration, economics, tourism, anthropology, among others. Therefore, entrepreneurial practice can be analysed from a broader perspective, seeking a more comprehensive definition that does not exclude its effects and motivations (Guerra & Paiva Junior, 2015). Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) present a definition that conceives entrepreneurship as an area that aims to understand how the processes of innovation and creation take place, focusing on the entrepreneurial subject and the consequences of their actions. Therefore, this article seeks to



understand the symbolic dimension of entrepreneurship, which can manifest itself in different ways depending on the society in which it is practised and based.

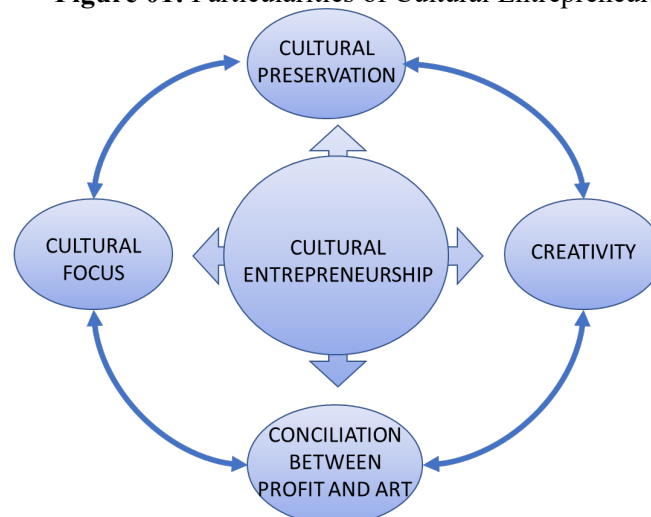
With regard to culture, Pereiro and Fernandes (2018) present a series of concepts that dialogue with each other to form a broad understanding of the term. In general terms, culture consists of a set of practices, values, beliefs and customs of a given society. Although not intrinsic, it is assimilated during the process of 'enculturation', in which individuals internalise the social context of their group during childhood (Pereiro & Fernandes, 2018).

According to Julien, Marchesnay and Machado (2010, p. 357) and Machado (2013, p. 18), culture is "defined by customs", which guide the individual and collective practices of a society, as well as entrepreneurial practices. It is from this causal relationship that culture builds its relationship with entrepreneurship. Thus, the cultural aspects of a society have a great influence on the actions of its entrepreneurs, since their beliefs, interests and perspectives are conditioned by culture. By understanding this relationship as constant, it is possible to define a concept that encompasses the dynamics between entrepreneurship and culture. This brings us to Cultural Entrepreneurship. Reflecting on this concept, Davel and Corá (2016) point out that, although the interrelationship between entrepreneurship and culture is the subject of many studies, the same attention is not paid to the integration of these two concepts. Cultural Entrepreneurship should therefore be analysed in greater depth in order to understand its particularities.

2.1 Cultural entrepreneurship and its particularities

As already mentioned, cultural entrepreneurship is a confluence of entrepreneurship and culture, which means that this theoretical perspective aims to analyse the relationship and implications of culture in entrepreneurial practice (Guerra & Paiva Junior, 2015; Davel & Cora, 2016), as seen in Figure 01.

Figure 01: Particularities of Cultural Entrepreneurship



Source: own elaboration

To understand it from this perspective, it is possible to draw up explanations based on its peculiarities. We can start by analysing one of them: the focus on culture.

It is possible to state that the focus on culture is the central characteristic of cultural entrepreneurship, since culture is the foundation on which the entrepreneurial practices of a

given society are developed (Lounbury & Glynn, 2019). Contributing to this observation, Machado (2013, p. 17) argues that "culture represents a conscious scheme of values that guide the daily activities of a community or society, introducing a symbolic order that corresponds to meaning". When assessing which direction is given to entrepreneurial practice based on culture, Lounsbury and Glynn (2019) note that culture is transposed from micro-relationships, based in the individual sphere, to macro-relationships, in the collective sphere. Consequently, this symbolic transposition reinforces the notion of collectivity through entrepreneurial practice, strengthening a group's identity ties with a productive activity born within the cultural sphere. This reveals the next particularity of cultural entrepreneurship: the preservation of culture.

It is in this sense that Marins and Davel (2020) reveal a cultural logic applied to entrepreneurship. This vision, from which cultural entrepreneurship originates, is concerned with cultural transmission based on collective relationships, which enables to preserve a particular practice - which can even happen unconsciously (Aquino, Xavier & Muniz, 2022). The social environment thus becomes the ideal stage for cultural transmission, as it comprises symbolic exchange relationships from the production process to the consumption process (Bendassoli, Wood Jr., Kirschbaum, & Cunha, 2009; Davel & Cora, 2016; Beling *et al.*, 2020). According to Araújo and Barbosa (2019), cultural entrepreneurship, based on social relationships, stimulates the next particularity to be analysed: creativity.

As Marins and Davel (2020) point out, corroborating Carvalho *et al.* (2017), the creative industries cannot be understood without their relationship with art. This implies that the production process engendered by the creative industries is dependent on the artistic aspect of production (Marins & Davel, 2020, p. 122). Therefore, the cultural entrepreneur can be understood as an artist, who directs their production with not only financial needs and gains in mind, but also their subjectivity. By employing creativity in the production process, the act of cultural entrepreneurship makes innovation a common consequence of this particularity (Davel & Cora, 2016; Marins & Davel, 2020; Campos, 2021). This creative aspect, combined with the innovative aspect of cultural entrepreneurship, provides the opportunity for the last feature highlighted: the reconciliation of profit and art.

This dual role of cultural entrepreneurship is its most complex characteristic. How can cultural activity, attached to entrepreneurship, maintain its symbolic meaning and not exclusively surrender to the logic of capital? To answer this question, we must first problematise the damaging potential of capitalist logic for cultural practices. In this sense, Karl Polanyi's thought elucidates the idea that capitalist practices, in their industrial process, have the potential to degrade culture through the "disintegration of the cultural environment" (Polanyi, 2000, p. 191) of a given society. This process takes place when the logic of production is orientated solely towards profit, which allows for its symbolic emptying.

However, as Campos (2021, p. 245) points out, cultural entrepreneurship "can be visualised as an activity that does not deny the economic dimension but has culture as its orientation and purpose". Thus, the role of the cultural entrepreneur is reframed, and characterising them as an artist (Davel & Cora, 2016). Marins and Davel (2020) can contribute to this understanding by stating that "the entrepreneur is a creator of economic value who must balance these objectives with cultural values to produce development [...], economic, creative and social results" (Marins & Davel, 2020, p. 118). From this reframed role of a cultural entrepreneur, it is possible to draw a clearer perspective with regard to reconciling profit with art in the production process.

This is where the aforementioned peculiarities dialogue most deeply. Creativity, for example, represents a way of reconciling the artistic aspect of cultural entrepreneurship, producing innovation. In this sense, the creative industry can be understood as the environment



in which this reconciliation takes place. It is in this environment that the cultural entrepreneur, endowed with symbolic social values, produces a form of artistic expression, creating identity (Davel & Cora, 2016) - not only with their product, but also with the environment itself: the creative industry. Furthermore, thinking about the role of the entrepreneur in reconciling these artistic and economic aspects of production, Davel and Cora (2016, p. 378) state that the understanding of cultural entrepreneurship refers to the incorporation of artistic and cultural qualifications, with the need for multiple skills such as management techniques, understanding the manufacturing process, having a creative vision, imagination and other qualities.

From what has been said throughout this session, cultural entrepreneurship can be understood as a particular concept, endowed with its own characteristics, such as its focus on culture, cultural preservation, creativity and the reconciliation of profit and art. Based on this theoretical observation, the next topic of this paper will reflect on the specific role of handicrafts within this dynamic, understood as a cultural product that can manifest the particularities of cultural entrepreneurship in its production process, strengthening the symbolic ties between producer and product.

2.2 Craft culture

Crafts can be conceptualised as the manual transformation of raw materials using techniques that involve cultural, identity and symbolic aspects, combined with skill and creativity (Lima, 2017; Vieira, 2014) of those who carry out the activity, known as 'artisans'. Preserving the tradition of handicrafts not only guarantees the perpetuation of the craft, but also maintains emotional ties to the practice, as well as memories, techniques and solidarity between artisans (Lima, 2017). This builds a symbolic dimension, both for artisans, their families and the community, which is moulded around this practice.

Silva (2016) contributes to this perspective by stating that handicrafts are a cultural activity imbued with aesthetic and symbolic value. This dual meaning of the practice of handicrafts consequently constitutes a complexity. Thus, it would be insufficient to analyse the practice of handicrafts by looking at these facets in isolation, being necessary to reconcile both aspects in order to understand them satisfactorily. This is due to the fact that the symbolic and aesthetic elements of handicrafts also serve "the interests of consumer society" (Silva, 2016, p. 123). So, it is necessary to understand their economic potential.

Therefore, the subsistence aspect of handicrafts implies this complex dimension, since the product of handicraft labour is no longer used only by those who produce it, since it has come to guarantee subsistence through exchange. The product of the craftsman's labour thus becomes a commodity, endowed not only with use values, but also with exchange values (Marx, 2017). A problem arises from this commodity configuration. Reis (2016) denounces this problem when he states that the logic of commercialising cultural production, from the point of view of profitability, tends to harm the creation of symbolic values, which renders the artisan's practice meaningless. According to Reis (2016), it is understood that, as a consequence of this logic, handicrafts are gradually being replaced by machine-made crafts. This process standardises production as large-scale, which "consolidates a cycle that retains the autonomy of the craftsman, distancing him from an emancipatory perspective" (Reis, 2016, p. 22).

Reflecting on the emptying of the symbolic meaning of the artisan's activity, the author presents the concept of the 'atomistic entrepreneur', which refers to a "type of embodied entrepreneur who is conceived as an isolated and individualistic being" (Reis, 2016, p. 22). This conception of the artisan as an individualised entrepreneur completely breaks with the original communal character of symbolic craft production. Practices become mere reproductions of the



standard imposed by the logic of commercialisation, and popular knowledge loses its symbolic value, becoming merely technical. Thus, cultural entrepreneurship, when applied to craft practices, should reconcile the pursuit of profit with cultural preservation.

3 Methodology

This study is characterised as qualitative and exploratory, based on the concept of triangulation, using multiple data collection techniques (Angrosino, 2009; Flick, 2009). Interviews, direct observation and photographic records were used to gather data and gain a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were carried out with craft traders in the municipal markets during the exploratory phase of the research. The interviewees were selected by accessibility from a total of 22 establishments. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, using a structured script. Each interview lasted around 30 minutes. Subsequently, four open-ended interviews were conducted with artisans (suppliers) in the municipality of Santana de São Francisco, using the snowball technique. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees and transcribed. This data collection technique enabled a better understanding of what the interviewees know, believe, hope, feel, wish, intend to do or have done (Gil, 1999), which helped to understand the actions of artisans and craft traders in terms of the production and marketing of their products, as well as listening to their accounts of experience. In this way, it was possible to understand their vision of cultural entrepreneurship in order to broaden the understanding of the relationship between cultural entrepreneurship and handicrafts.

Three observation visits were made: the first to the markets, in the exploratory phase of the research, to observe the working dynamics of the traders; the second to the specific location of the craft trade within the markets; and the third to the place where the products are made. During direct observation, which involved visits to the interviewees' workplaces, it was possible to observe the activities carried out by artisans and associate them with the interviewees' discourse on the surroundings. This context also gave researchers the opportunity to formulate new conceptual bases related to the research problem (Vergara, 2009).

Photographic records were taken in conjunction with the observation phase. This technique has the potential to reveal information about contextual relationships that is sometimes missing from field notes or interview data (Kunter & Bell, 2006). Thus, researchers recorded moments in the study that could serve to complement the actions or speech of the interviewees. It is worth noting that the field research period covered the months of January to May 2022, when the markets had only restarted their operations after the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the process of analysing the data, the narrative analysis technique was used, which gives the empirical material as a whole greater attention in the relationship between the individual stories of the cultural entrepreneurs and the means of investigating their entrepreneurial actions that constitute reality (Riessman, 2008; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Kim, 2016; Gabriel, 2018). This stage was structured in three cycles: (1) familiarisation of all the material collected, which provided an overview and an indication of the main categories that emerged from the empirical research; (2) analysis of the semi-structured interviews and direct observations, based on what the interviewees narrated about their work activities with handicrafts; (3) analysis of the images recorded by the researchers, which considered the interviewees' actions in terms of handicraft production and product presentation.

4 Aracaju's markets: origin, importance and handicrafts



At the beginning of the 1920s, the demand for a market that would meet the needs of Aracaju's population was growing (Filgueiras, 2019). Aracaju's newest market was built with modern architecture for the time, and was named 'Antônio Franco', after the businessman and politician Antônio do Prado Franco, who made the financial loan for the construction of the building (Silva, 2009; Lima, 2010; Filgueiras, 2019). As the city of Aracaju grew, the market's movement intensified and Antônio Franco's structure became insufficient to accommodate the commercial movement. In 1947, the then mayor of Aracaju signed a partnership with the State government to start building an auxiliary market, named after industrialist Thales Ferraz (Neto, 2019). At the end of the 1990s, work began on another market, the Albano Franco market - now Maria Virgínia Leite Franco market - which opened in the end of September 1998 (Filgueiras, 2019).

Aracaju's Municipal Markets are currently made up of Antônio Franco, Thales Ferraz and Maria Franco Markets, being an important cultural and commercial centre for the city. While Antônio Franco Market is characterised as a tourist-oriented shopping centre, Thales Ferraz Market splits its space between gastronomy and handicrafts, and Albano Franco Market includes the fruit and vegetable sector (Filgueiras, 2019; Neto, 2019). The present analysis will focus on the first two, where the handicraft traders are located.

As defined in the methodology, the research progressed in three stages. The first exploratory, to get to know the field, and the others involving image recording, active observation and interviews with traders from Thales Ferraz and Antônio Franco Markets and artisans from Santana de São Francisco, carried out in person and transcribed in a field diary. It was not possible to specify an average duration for the interviews because, due to the work dynamics of the interviewees, interruptions and breaks were frequent.

The interview script was structured around the theme of Cultural Entrepreneurship, seeking to understand the traders' relationship with their craft, the difficulties they face, the origin of their products and possible innovations in the sales process. In addition, questions were asked about the traders' motivation in working with the sale of handicrafts, how they see the continuity of their activity and the difficulties faced in selling handicrafts in the market. More objectively, they were also asked about changes in the marketing and publicity process, and whether/how the government encourages the profession of these traders. In this section, the main impressions of the groups interviewed will be presented, understanding the markets as a place to resell handicraft products and not their production.

4.1 Thales Ferraz Market

Thales Ferraz market is located between Maria Virgínia Leite Franco and Antônio Franco markets. Its area is predominantly used to sell ceramic handicrafts, straw, religious items and medicinal herbs (Leite, 2019). It is organised around a series of stalls that house craft shops



(Filgueiras, 2019). It was possible to observe that the market does not have many craft shops, but those that do occupy most of the stalls. Ceramic handicrafts predominate. The pieces can be seen on display in front of the shops, which stand out in the internal landscape.

Figure 02: Taipa stalls's house



Source: Field record (2022).

Regarding the traders' motivation, the most frequent response was that financial need led them to choose their profession. Regarding the traders' opinion on continuing their activity, most of them complained about a series of problems, especially during the pandemic. One of the difficulties they reported was obtaining handicraft products. Before, there was no need to look for products in the countryside, as they were brought to the market free of charge. However, with the pandemic, traders were forced to travel to other municipalities to pick up the products, adding the expense of travelling to the marketing process.

Regarding the difficulties of selling handicrafts at the market, Thales Ferraz Market traders said that despite the difficulties of publicising the market, the handicrafts sell well, especially ceramic products. Regarding the origin of the products, a common thread was revealed: most of the straw, wood and clay handicrafts sold at Thales Ferraz Market come from the countryside of the State of Sergipe. The straw and wood products come from places like Itabaianinha, Simão Dias, Lagarto, Tobias Barreto and Pirambu. With regard to ceramic handicrafts, the municipality of Santana do São Francisco was mentioned by all traders.

Another important finding, which will be explored further in the section on the Antônio Franco Market, concerns products that originate in cities in other states (mainly Recife, Caruaru and Alto do Moura, in the State of Pernambuco) and are sold in the market as if they were products originating from the State of Sergipe.

With regard to marketing and publicity, an interesting context emerged. Most traders have adapted to technological changes, mainly because of the pandemic. *WhatsApp* and *Instagram* are the digital platforms they use the most to publicise their work and attract buyers, especially for orders, which has grown since the Covid-19 pandemic. As for government incentives to keep their businesses going, traders were unanimous in saying that they do not receive any incentives, according to the following statements: *"We do not receive any, the government should at least publicise the market to tourists, but it does not."*; *"There is no incentive, it just gets in the way."*

Figure 03: Ceramics as the dominant craft at Thales Ferraz Market



Source: Field record (2022).

4.2 Antônio Franco Market

The main difference between Thales Ferraz Market and Antônio Franco Market undoubtedly lies on the character of the products sold. While at Thales Ferraz Market the vast majority of products are handmade, made from clay, straw and wood (Leite, 2019), at Antônio Franco Market, handmade and industrialised products are mixed together. This reality is in line with what Beling *et al.* (2020, p. 27) point out. Taking Canclini's (1983) perspective, stating that "the market for handicraft products is no longer specific to handicrafts, other articles are inserted for commercialisation that are not made by the artisans".

When asked about entrepreneurship, traders in both markets emphasised the financial 'need' as a motivator for entering the handicraft trade. Nonetheless, three of the establishments are inherited businesses, two at Antônio Franco Market and one at Thales Ferraz Market, characterising a family tradition. With regard to concerns about continuing the business, despite reservations about the rise in the price of materials for resale, the majority of those interviewed responded positively about continuing their commercial activities, and even mentioned the expansion of their audience, due to the increase in the number of orders and requests via social networks, despite the pandemic.

Regarding the hurdles faced in the process of selling artisanal products, traders had different views. Some stated that: "*It is only difficult, when we think it is*"; "*I do not struggle, I am a good salesman*". On the other hand, others complained about the low flow of people in the market due to the pandemic and the consequent increase in product prices, which brought a negative reaction from customers. According to a report: "[...] *prices have increased, and people are finding it strange*".

Regarding the origin of the products sold, in all situations, the municipality of Santana do São Francisco was highlighted as the main supplier of clay pieces, along with the municipalities of Aquidabã and Propriá, which are in the same region. Embroidery products come from Divina Pastora, and straw baskets and sieves come from Itaporanga, Pirambu and Simão Dias.

At this stage of the research, the problem raised in the previous section was confirmed, as handicraft products originated from other municipalities, especially those sold at Antônio Franco Market, with many even coming from outside the State of Sergipe. Various locations were mentioned, such as Fortaleza (Ceará), Itabuna (Bahia), Maceió (Alagoas), and even some municipalities in Minas Gerais. The city of Caruaru (Pernambuco) stood out the most. These products are sold in the markets along with those from the interior of the State, and there is no clear difference between them. Thus, an unaware tourist often purchases the products assuming they are from Sergipe, when in reality they may come from another State.

Figure 04: Presence of industrialised products at Antônio Franco Market



Source: Field record (2022).

With regard to the marketing and publicity process, the majority of traders in Antônio Franco Market said that nothing had changed in recent years, and that there had been no innovation in the process of publicising products, even after the pandemic. Similar to Thales Ferraz Market, traders were also unanimous in saying that they do not receive any government incentives. Among the comments, three stand out: *"I am encouraged to give up every day"*; *"The help is from God"*; *"It helps to break us, the government makes everything difficult"*.

4.3 Santana de São Francisco and ceramic handicrafts

The exploratory phase confirmed that there are no craftspeople in the municipal markets, which was fundamental in leading researchers to investigate the origin of the products sold at the markets. The handicraft products that stand out the most and are sold the most in the markets are ceramic products, and the place most often mentioned as the origin of these products was the municipality of Santana do São Francisco. Therefore, the need to visit the town arose as the artisans from Santana do São Francisco are in fact the artisans of the markets, as the products there were made from their own hands.

The municipality of Santana do São Francisco is located in the north-west of Sergipe. The first records of local development date back to the beginning of the 20th century, when Fazenda Carrapicho was founded. The need to acquire household utensils and the ease of working with the region's soil led the families of the employees of the Carrapicho farm to make the first manual artefacts out of clay (IBGE, 2022), allowing them to find an alternative way to make ends meet (Canclini, 1983).

Handicrafts soon spread throughout the region, generating jobs and income for local inhabitants and becoming a very important economic practice, as well as an important cultural expression for the local population. The farm grew due to the arrival of new inhabitants looking for work in the region and became the former village of Carrapicho, linked to the municipality of Neópolis. In 1989, it was emancipated and named Santana do São Francisco, with just over 7,000 inhabitants, with handicrafts being its most important economic activity (IBGE, 2022). More recently, with Law No. 8.981, of 24 February 2022, the municipality was given the title of 'Sergipe's Capital of Clay Handicrafts' (Government of Sergipe, 2022).

4.4 The production of ceramic handicrafts

The pottery of Santana do São Francisco is classified, according to Vieira (2014, p. 45), as *terracotta*, "clay baked in a kiln, unglazed, although sometimes painted". It is generally subsistence work and is developed through precarious and informal labour. Ceramic handicrafts in Santana are an artistic activity, imbued with aesthetic, symbolic and cultural value. It is closely related to the history of the municipality and its inhabitants, being passed down from generation to generation, linking them in a profound way to the practice of handicrafts. The daily life of the Santana community is permeated by the various processes of this symbolic production, from collecting clay from the São Francisco river to selling it at the municipality's Handicrafts Centre. In this way, the cultural entrepreneur from São Francisco, based on the focus given to culture by cultural entrepreneurship (Machado, 2013; Lounsbury & Glynn 2019), preserves the cultural practices of their community, even if unconsciously (Aquino, Xavier & Muniz, 2022), while exercising their profession and guaranteeing their income (Marins & Davel, 2020; Campos, 2021).

Figure 05: Facade of a handicraft production house



Source: Field record (2022).

The handicraft production houses, as they are called in the town, have a rustic, unsanitary structure, with poor lighting and ventilation. All the pieces are created 'from scratch', as artisans say - which is apparent evidence of the creative process inherent in craft practice (Vieira, 2014; Reis, 2016) and cultural entrepreneurship (Davel & Cora, 2016; Marins & Davel, 2020; Campos, 2021). Most of the pieces are made to order, using images or descriptions that customers send by mobile phone as a reference. This exchange of information, as well as the

creativity of the artisan, gives rise to a prototype, which serves as the basis for the mass reproduction of several identical pieces. After the pieces have been fired, a stage that helps the composition and hardening of the clay, they go through the finishing process with painting and final touches.

During the visit to the production houses, it was observed that artisans strongly focused on the manual activity. The dialogue between artisans was short and monosyllabic, with rare moments when they took their eyes off the pieces, working with dexterity and hard. Mobile phones are used all the time, both as a tool for communicating with clients, suppliers and middlemen, and as an instrument that contributes to the creation of the pieces, by searching for images and artefacts that act as a reference for the production.

Although they are created 'from scratch', a large part of the production process is characterised by a mass reproduction of the prototypes, which can be religious, decorative or identity objects from the region (fishermen, farmers, etc.). Of particular note is the reproduction of a man with a large foot, known as a 'pezão' - made by the famous Santana artisan José Roberto Freitas, known as 'Beto Pezão' - an emblematic and representative image for the State of Sergipe and of Santana do São Francisco itself. Not much innovation was observed in the creation of the pieces, but rather a process of mass reproduction that ends up making up a market saturated with similar products. The creativity of the process was applied to the production of the prototype, which served as an example for making others. This means that the pieces were being produced to meet a demand, rather than necessarily meeting any creative endeavours throughout their production. Thus, it creates a large-scale reproduction model - which was marked by creativity. Only some of the craftswomen stood out for moulding small, differentiated clay pieces from '*things that come to mind*', as they themselves *put it*, in contrast to the predominant process of large-scale reproduction of prototypes - which still denotes the creativity involved in the process (Vieira, 2014; Reis, 2016; Lima, 2017).

Figure 06: Inside a production house



Source: Field record (2022).

At the entrance to the town is 'Edilson de Oliveira Forte' Crafts Centre, opened in 1996, which houses more than 60 craftspeople, most of them women. Traders who sell at the centre are relatives of artisans from the production houses. Some artisans also sold at the centre, though spent most of their time working in their own homes - such as the production house - or in the city's only Crafts Cooperative.

The pieces sold at the Handicrafts Centre are very different from those seen in the production houses and the cooperative, with their finishing and painting being more refined. In addition, it is important to note that there is almost no craft production inside the centre, but rather the display and sale of ready-made pieces. Most of the pieces sold there were commissioned. Each trader's space is divided up into stands where their products are displayed. An interesting observation is the use of the PIX payment tool as a form of payment.

From the above, it was possible to exercise strong dialogues between theory and practice. The empirical analysis, for example, allowed practical observation of the dynamics of enculturation, as described by Pereiro and Fernandes (2018), present in the social context of the municipality of Santana do São Francisco, as well as making it possible to affirm that an artisan of Santana do São Francisco is a cultural entrepreneur. This is due to the fact that their activity is not merely an economic practice, but is imbued with a symbolic charge (Silva, 2016; Castilho *et al.*, 2017), involving and moving the entire community around them (Lima, 2017).

5 Cultural Entrepreneurship and Handicrafts: discussions and contributions

The field research enabled a practical observation of the dynamics of enculturation - described by Pereiro and Fernandes (2018) - present in the social context of the municipality of Santana do São Francisco, as well as enabling to attest that Santana's artisans are cultural entrepreneurs. This is due to the fact that their activity is not merely an economic practice, but is imbued with a symbolic charge (Silva, 2016; Castilho *et al.*, 2017), involving and moving the entire community around them (Lima, 2017).

Marins and Davel (2020, p. 117-8), when theoretically listing possible concepts for cultural entrepreneurship, bring up terms that relate directly to artisans of Santana do São Francisco: innovation, creativity, risks and uncertainties, work and management. Although much of the production is not done in an innovative or creative way, being a mere large scale reproduction, it is not possible to deny the existence of a creative aspect in the production of handicrafts in the municipality. These traits, which are present in the handicraft production process in Santana do São Francisco, differ from what was found among traders at Thales Ferraz and Antônio Franco markets.

The market trader is not a cultural entrepreneur, as creativity and innovation, crucial points for defining this concept (Davel & Cora, 2018; Marins; Davel, 2020; Campos, 2021), are not present in the purely commercial dynamics revealed. Another problem encountered was the 'invasion' of industrialised products (Canclini, 1983; Beling *et al.*, 2020) in the market environment. This reality ends up 'devaluing' handmade work, which loses space in an environment where it should be prominent. This imposes risks not only on the sale of handicrafts in the markets, but also on the production itself, as it directly influences the profitability of the activity, and consequently the prospects of future generations, who are crucial for the continuity of handicraft work.

In this regard, this article makes three contributions to research, one to the practice of cultural entrepreneurship and two of a theoretical nature, which should be taken into account in order to deepen the studies and practical impacts of cultural entrepreneurship as an incipient field. Firstly, as a practical implication, this study can, based on its results, provide public policy managers (Vitória & Emmendoerfer, 2021) linked to municipal and/or state departments in the field of culture and commerce with tools to draw up programmes to promote entrepreneurial activity, with a focus on preserving cultural activities, such as craft production. The situation revealed by the empirical research shows that, both in the Central Market and in Santana do São Francisco, handicraft products are suffering from a process of discrediting. Such process



tends to reduce the potential of the production and marketing activity due to both the unfavourable outlook for the continuity of the practice in the community that surrounds it and the dispute over spaces (which are intended to be geared towards cultural appreciation) for its marketing.

The second contribution, of a theoretical nature, concerns the advance in studies on cultural entrepreneurship, highlighting its focus on handicrafts. In this way, new avenues of research can be broken down to add to research efforts on the subject of cultural entrepreneurship, which is still in its infancy (Marins & Davel, 2019). In addition, it opens space for reflection on the problem of the trend towards emptying the symbolic character of artisanal activity, discussed in this paper. The third contribution, which involves the particularities of cultural entrepreneurship identified in the theoretical framework (the focus on culture, the preservation of culture, creativity and the reconciliation of profit and art), opens new possibilities for multidisciplinary approaches (Neves & Davel, 2022), involving studies in areas such as anthropology, sociology and economics.

6 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to understand the relationship between cultural entrepreneurship and handicrafts, assessing the symbolic construction of the craft practice. The object of study was Aracaju's central markets: Thales Ferraz Market and Antônio Franco Market, considered to be spaces filled with cultural goods, represented by diversified handicrafts and visited by tourists and local people. Moreover, the municipality of Santana de São Francisco, the centre of origin of the ceramic handicraft products sold in the markets was also focus of this study. This objective was achieved given the strong relationship between the themes, through the theoretical production developed, as well as the findings made in the field, which will contribute to future discussions and analyses involving both subjects.

As far as the theoretical field is concerned, knowledge about the concepts, characteristics and peculiarities of the relationship between cultural entrepreneurship and handicrafts was developed through empirical research. The exploratory research revealed that the commercialisation of handicrafts in the markets investigated is not carried out directly by their producers, but by traders (or middlemen) who take part in the chain of dissemination of the handicraft culture, though without entering into the production process and the maintenance of the cultural ties that permeate the creation and production of a handicraft. The details of the artisans' activities were analysed through field research in the town of Santana do São Francisco, the main supplier of ceramic handicrafts in Sergipe.

With regard to the systematisation of entrepreneurial actions that stimulate the creativity of artisans, the reality found was a lack of effective actions from the government and artisan associations to establish the recognition of these producers as entrepreneurs and guardians of a secular culture associated with the life of the riverside dweller. In particular as the clay used in production is associated with the type of soil found in that region.

In this regard, this article has contributed to two fields: the theoretical and the practical. In the theoretical field, it has advanced the concepts of cultural entrepreneurship and its relationship with handicrafts, given that there have been few recent publications on the subject. In the field of cultural entrepreneurship, handicrafts have great entrepreneurial potential as a cultural activity, focusing on creative and innovative issues, perfecting the work of artisans who can enhance the possibilities of making their craft profitable while maintaining its symbolic character.



As far as the practical field is concerned, this study reveals two problems that leave room for further research into municipal markets in general and markets in the city of Aracaju in particular. The first is the absence of artisans in the markets, which is a limitation of this study, and the second is the presence of industrialised products that share space with artisanal products. Both problems could be addressed and explored in greater depth in future studies, which could add even more information in the context of the markets researched and other central markets in Brazilian municipalities with tourism potential. It also offers new possibilities for thinking about market management and reviewing strategies for mobilising craft production as a way of revitalising culture and its symbolic meanings.

In view of the methodological limitation, the research used qualitative methodologies, preventing any generalisation of the results presented herein. However, other studies based on other markets could use a quantitative methodology with the use of statistical tests.

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