

Article

Synergies of Cultural–Creative Industries and Development in Peripheral Areas: Networking, Social Capital, and Place

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Abstract: Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) are widely acknowledged in academic and policy discourse as fundamental resources for local development. Nevertheless, a deeper understanding of the analysis of CCI function patterns and full potential exploitation in peripheral areas is needed in the literature on regional and local economic development. Peripheral destinations are often characterized by specific obstacles such as geographical remoteness from dominant economic centers, poor infrastructure and amenities, limited capacity for decision-making, etc. However, they can also have characteristics that can support the sustainability and development of a place, such as rich cultural heritage, traditional cultural industries, uniqueness and authenticity, and cultural identity and social cohesion. This paper provides an overview of the main characteristics of the CCIs in peripheral areas and explores synergy patterns, a significant procedure for sustainability, exchange of knowledge and practices, development of actions, promotion of innovation and local development. More specifically, the study incorporates formal networking through entrepreneurial practices and informal networking through social capital into the network theory of the cultural sector in peripheral areas of Greece. In order to identify the key traits and factors that contribute to synergies in the cultural sector, a two-stage research design has been employed. A qualitative approach based on structured interviews and relative importance index analysis to provide an assessment framework has been used. Results indicate that CCI synergy in peripheral areas depends primarily on social capital, which is extremely important in local policies rather than just entrepreneurial practices.

Keywords: cultural–creative industries; cultural heritage; formal–informal networking; social capital



Citation: Malisiova, S.; Kostopoulou, S. Synergies of Cultural–Creative Industries and Development in Peripheral Areas: Networking, Social Capital, and Place. *Heritage* **2024**, *7*, 4500–4519. <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage7080212>

Academic Editor: Stella Sofia Kyvelou

Received: 6 June 2024

Revised: 28 July 2024

Accepted: 15 August 2024

Published: 19 August 2024



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1. Introduction

The creative economy is one of the global economy's fastest expanding sectors, which has a significant role in political agendas and academic literature and a strong potential for economic growth and sustainable development [1]. Creativity is a complex concept that is still lacking a single, widely accepted definition that can capture all of its different facets [2]. Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) have a positive economic impact on society by generating income and creating jobs, fostering innovation and creativity and producing positive spillover effects to other economic sectors. CCIs also generate non-economic contributions to society by encouraging social development, social cohesion and inclusion, cultural diversity, and national identity [3].

The term “Cultural and Creative Industries” describes a group of industries that integrate the creation, production, and development of tangible and intangible creative and cultural content with cultural and symbolic value and are based on individual talent, human creativity, intellectual property, knowledge, and technology [4]. It is widely acknowledged that CCIs encompass a wide range of industries, including architecture, arts and crafts, heritage, advertising, design, music, performing arts, film, radio, television, video, photography, fashion, publishing, research and development, software, and computer games [5].

CCIs have become increasingly identified as a driving factor of urban and regional economic growth, having a significant role in local development strategies and innovation systems [6]. Undoubtedly, one of the key issues of CCIs is the synergy patterns and functioning networks that are created in a local framework and have the potential to enhance cooperation, manage competition and environmental risks, and foster regional development [7–10]. CCI synergy is considered to be essential to the growth and sustainability of remote peripheral areas that often exhibit particular characteristics and confront development-related challenges. Peripheral areas are often delineated by their rural and geographic remoteness and distance from major dominant economic centers, their significant socioeconomic challenges and declining economic viability, their lack of control over decision-making processes, poor infrastructure and amenities, population decreases, migration and aging, and also low education levels and investment attractiveness [11]. However, unique landscapes, rich natural and cultural heritage, and conducive environments for recreation, peace, and tranquility are only a few of the features that often make peripheral areas attractive to tourists and contribute to local development [12,13].

Although the debates related to CCI in terms of academic study and policy agendas have expanded internationally over the last few decades, the majority of studies are still conducted mainly at the national or regional level. Even when they focus on the NUTS 4 level, most of the evaluations have looked into metropolitan and urban systems [14]; culture and creativity are generally considered essentially urban phenomena both in academic research and in policy documents [15]. Remote, peripheral areas have consequently received relatively much less attention, partly because of data limitations and an underlying belief that cultural and creative activities are predominantly urban phenomena. As Bertacchini and Borrione (2013) indicated, even though large metropolitan areas continue to be the most significant hubs of the conventional cultural and creative economy, craft-based industries and creative design systems typically tend to be located in small urban settlements [16]. This finding merits more research to focus on peripheral areas, particularly given the lack of scientific knowledge on the subject and the policy relevance accorded to the sector in non-core territories [14].

The overall aim of this exploratory study is to provide an overview of the key traits of the CCIs in peripheral areas and to explore the main factors that impact the synergies of CCIs by incorporating entrepreneurial practices and social capital into the network theory. The paper addresses these issues by using the example of traditional cultural industries based on tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which are especially important for local economic development and social cohesion in peripheral areas, where local culture and traditions are handed down from generation to generation: they can promote cultural identity, reflect regional distinctiveness and authenticity, reveal the inhabitants' "sense of belonging", help revitalize a community, provide jobs and income opportunities, and attract visitors [17–20].

Two key synergy concepts that have emerged from the literature and illustrate the potential applications of network theory are of interest to this paper: (a) Formal networking related to Entrepreneurial Skills of CCIs in the following forms: (i) access to funding, (ii) access to market, (iii) intellectual property rights instruments, (iv) access to knowledge, (v) access to innovation [21], and (b) Informal Networking related to Social Capital of CCIs with the following forms: (i) structural, (ii) relational, and (iii) cognitive social capital [22]. Consequently, the paper's primary research questions include: What are the distinguishing characteristics of traditional cultural industries in peripheral areas? Which synergy patterns exist in traditional cultural industries located in peripheral areas of Greece? What key elements do traditional cultural industries in peripheral areas believe to be essential to their networking? Which aspects of entrepreneurial practices or social capital are considered by traditional cultural industries in peripheral areas to be most important in the synergy process?

In the following, the paper thus sets out to improve our understanding of CCIs in peripheral areas and identify potential responses to the primary research questions. The

paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents a pertinent review of the literature about CCI characteristics, the innovative component of CCIs, peripheral areas, types of synergies, formal networking through entrepreneurial practices, and informal networking through social capital aspects. The research design and methodology are presented in Section 3, which explains the procedures and methods used for data collection, as well as the qualitative approach that was employed. Section 4 focuses on the analysis of the research results of the case study on peripheral areas in Greece. Finally, Section 5 provides the conclusions of the paper and a discussion on the results of the fieldwork, while recommendations for further research are proposed. Following this research, one can identify the role of CCIs in local development in peripheral areas and the determinants of synergy, such as entrepreneurial practices and social capital.

2. Literature Review

Several unique characteristics set CCIs apart from businesses in other sectors [23]. Cultural and creative goods and services have some common characteristics, such as incorporating values that are not utilitarian (aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, and symbolic aspects) [24]. Typically, creative–cultural enterprises have a high failure rate and are transient in nature. The market for creative/cultural commodities is subject to a degree of unpredictability that is influenced by fashion, trends, and consumer uncertainty. Furthermore, a particular aspect of this sector is the way businesses expand within a “fragmented” market structure, primarily due to structural limitations associated with local particularities and characteristics. Another important feature of creative and cultural industries is their reliance on micro, small, and medium-sized businesses for the majority of their economic activity and employment. Moreover, these businesses often lack the financial resources and/or entrepreneurial know-how necessary to develop business plans, misjudge the value of their intellectual property and rely heavily on government funding and investment [5].

Within a broader regeneration process driven by the so-called post-industrial transition, CCIs have emerged as a core issue in discussions about economic development, social cohesion, urban regeneration, and well-being. Territories put forward the uniqueness of their cultural resources as a competitive advantage in the field of local culture and creative economies [25,26], especially remote rural communities that have historically been gradually abandoned in favor of urban areas for an extended period of time. However, it is often believed that peripheral areas offer a wealth of untapped natural, human, and cultural capital, which is thought to be strategically important for reversing their depopulation trends. Enhancing natural and cultural resources, widely acknowledged as a local asset for sustainable growth and a driver of income, jobs, and wealth creation, is therefore one of the designated important sectors to support local development in peripheral areas.

Naldi et al. [27] argued that having access to natural and cultural amenities provides firms with unique and valuable resources that local entrepreneurs can use to expand and compete. The importance of amenities is particularly felt in CCIs within less developed rural areas, typically with lower accessibility to knowledge and innovation resources. However, innovativeness is a key element of CCIs [28], particularly for traditional cultural industries in peripheral areas where there is a lack of innovative processes. Although peripheral areas are not inherently less innovative than urban areas, innovation processes and output may vary depending on the size and diversity of the areas [27], the ability of CCIs to generate an innovative output being influenced by their territorial environment [29]. Local culture and tradition often incorporate elements of uniqueness and authenticity that can serve as a basis for the development of innovative competitive products through local traditional materials and production processes, acting as a source of inspiration for innovative ideas [30]. Therefore, CCIs in peripheral areas can innovate in different ways, considering various innovative forms, such as aesthetics, functionality, and content [29], and entrepreneurs can benefit from local place-specific assets in terms of natural and cultural amenities [27].

Given the significant focus placed by policy on the cultural and creative sector as a means of unlocking rural, peripheral communities from their downward trajectory, it is critical to comprehend the spatial patterns of the creative economy that may shape the potential for their success [14]. Further explorations of CCIs in peripheral areas are thus needed to understand how cultural and creative industries emerge from small, remote areas [31]. Filling gaps in cultural and creative economies in the periphery is our research objective and the main contribution of this paper.

The literature on regional development frequently emphasizes that there is no univocal definition of the periphery [32–34]. Even though the geographic periphery as a concept has a long history, the notion of periphery remains ambiguous and imprecise (see [35] for an annotated bibliography). According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, the term periphery refers to the ‘outer edge of a particular area’ and thus involves distance (cited in [35] (p. 238)). Friedmann’s [36] model primarily addressed the spatial distance from the core, with access and geographic distance being the principal criteria used in geography to separate the core from the periphery [37]. However, Noguera and Copus [38] argue that as socioeconomic characteristics became more significant, the concept of peripherality evolved to become “aspatial”. Some of the signs that have been identified by various studies outline such indicators as low population density, organizational thinness, lack of knowledge, capital and networks [34,39], downward mobility or sociocultural and political-administrative disintegration [40], consistent depopulation trends and asymmetrical power relations [33]. Furthermore, the periphery is defined as a position that is not only remote from a core but characterized by internal dispersion, the core being a position of high internal density [35]. In network theory terms, peripheral areas have the least network density, being disconnected from each other and sparsely connected to the network core [35]. Thus, it is considered that the periphery is in a disadvantaged position relative to the center, regardless of whether it is a territory or a network [33,35]. Given the number of approaches to defining the periphery and the number of indicators and underlying theories, it becomes self-evident that peripheral regions are not homogeneous [34,41]. This consideration emphasizes the significance of research at the sub-national level, even at more detailed levels than NUTS-2 [32,41,42].

While it is widely acknowledged in the academic literature that CCIs can have a multiplier effect on local development, there is a lack of scholarly research about their function patterns and networking in peripheral areas, often described as “distant, dispersed and disconnected” [35]. The term “network” is used in many different contexts and may have several meanings, such as relationships within a neighborhood, organizational activities, business collaboration and contacts, links between groups within a community or region and between communities and regions, governance mechanisms, or institutional forms of exchange [43]. All these distinctive notions essentially embrace the idea that there are “nodes” and “links”, where numerous authors based on this analysis proposed the definition of the network as a set of nodes connected by a set of ties [43,44]. In its most simplified form, a network is a group of mutually reliant players at various stages of established social connections that are regulated by ethical rules. All of these concepts, despite the complexity of networking, lead to the same conclusion: relationships and exchanges between individuals or/and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) advance society, foster knowledge integration and creative thinking, and encourage business expansion by converting a variety of inputs into positive outcomes [45].

A fundamental component of the network approach is understanding how behavior is embedded in social relationships. Thus, “social resources or assets” that are found in networks and concern cooperation, trust, norms, information exchange, tacit knowledge etc., compose “social capital” [22,46,47], with its fundamental tenet being the significance of value-generating social connections [48]. The notion of social capital has become increasingly popular in ongoing debates concerning the local development process [49]. Academic literature reveals that strong social capital is generally shown to support regional growth, ensure community interest and participation, encourage entrepreneurship, and

improve the tourism experience in local communities [50–52]. Different components of social capital, along with its structural and cognitive aspects, may contribute differently to produce influence in specific areas.

The concept of social capital has been widely accepted through the works of prominent scholars Bourdieu [53], Coleman [54], and Putnam [55,56]. Bourdieu [53] describes the concept of social capital as the sum of available resources—real or potential—associated with having a strong network that is more or less institutionalized. Coleman [54] (p. 98) defines social capital as “the structure of relations between actors and among actors” and considers that it is included in structure and networks. Furthermore, he argues that features and elements of social capital could strongly relate to business operations and economic activities, particularly in place-based or trade-based communities. Thus, he comes to the conclusion that social capital is a public good and benefits all parties involved in such a system. Putnam [55] (p. 19) defines social capital as “. . . connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them”. He emphasizes networks, norms, and social trust in social capital theory [55,56], and places a strong focus on cooperation and collaboration that benefit people and society and contribute to overall well-being.

Social capital is articulated as a component of territorial capital. The term ‘territorial capital’ was first proposed by the LEADER European Observatory in 1999 [57]; however, the term was popularized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2001 [58] (p. 6). The concept was mentioned in OECD’s *Territorial Outlook*, stating that “each area has a specific capital, its ‘territorial capital’, that is distinct from that of other areas and is determined by many factors”, e.g., “geographical location, size, a factor of production endowment, climate, traditions, natural resources, quality of life or the agglomeration economies provided by its cities, (. . .) its business incubators and industrial districts or other business networks” [59] (p. 15). The concept was reiterated by the European Commission, wherein one of its background documents for the Territorial Agenda 2020 [60] (p. 3) stated that “[p]ublic policies aimed at promoting territorial development and limiting disparities should first and foremost help areas to develop their territorial capital and to maximize their competitive advantage” [61].

Camagni et al. (2020) [62] indicated that the notion of territorial capital encompasses all geographically bound assets of a territorial character. These assets might be natural or artificial, material or immaterial, cognitive, social, cultural or identitarian, on which is based the competitiveness potential of regions and places. Different elements of territorial capital are closely interconnected and interdependent; for example, human capital may play a role in the generation of social capital, as educated people are more interested in participating in building cohesive communities [63,64].

The concept of social capital is closely related to cultural and institutional capital [65,66]. Dialects, customs, beliefs, and other elements are included in Throsby’s [65] (p. 7) definition of cultural capital as “the set of ideas, practices, beliefs, traditions, and values which serve to identify and bind together a given group of people”. According to Throsby [65], when culture is sufficiently valorized, it can lead to an increase in economic productivity and well-being. Institutional capital includes formal institutions (i.e., constitutions, laws, regulations and so on) and informal institutions (i.e., social conventions, interpersonal contacts, and informal networks) [66], which can be considered as part of social capital. Another important component of physical capital incorporating intangible values is artistic capital, defined as monuments, sites, or artwork; it can be identified within the concept of tangible cultural heritage and can be considered an important asset for endogenous development [65], particularly in touristic and cultural sectors [64] (p. 108).

Three different dimensions are used to categorize social capital characteristics and aspects: structural, relational, and cognitive social capital [22,67]. Structural social capital refers to more objective and externally observable social structures, such as network structural characteristics (e.g., network links, centrality, density, diversity, size, frequency, redundancy, etc.), network ties (strong, weak, government officials, strength, bonding,

bridging, linking, structural holes, etc.), trust and association membership and institutional links. Relational social capital includes social connections and ties with close acquaintances (e.g., family members and colleagues at work), as well as a variety of external stakeholders (e.g., executives from other businesses, board members, political leaders, government officers, and community leaders) and trust. Subjective and intangible components like mutual norms, values and obligations, reciprocity, common objectives and missions, attitudes, and beliefs are all a part of cognitive and social capital.

In sum, social capital refers to the degree of connectedness, quality, and quantity of social relations in a given population or the social relations that benefit a group. Research indicates that robust social capital upholds a sense of belonging, encourages collaboration both within and between groups, and supports the revival of the local economy [68].

3. Materials and Methods

This study provides an outline of the key features of CCI and explores the patterns of synergies between traditional cultural industries in peripheral areas. The research was highlighted through the literature on entrepreneurial character and social capital perspectives of CCIs. Even if academic literature connects these domains, a deeper understanding is still required. In this context and in consideration of the literature review, the main research aim is to examine the types of synergies that can be found in traditional cultural industries in peripheral areas of Greece and the critical components of the synergy process that focus on entrepreneurial skills and social capital.

3.1. Study Area

The research was carried out in the Regional Unit of Rodopi, one of the six Regional Units in the Region of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace (REMTh) in Northern Greece. REMTh is a secondary local government organization covering the northeastern edge of the country, also including the islands of Thassos and Samothraki. The region is one of the weakest regional economies in the country, ranking 12th out of the 13 Greek regions in GDP per capita performance (EUD 10,908 in 2020), according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) [69]. The area deals with various obstacles and low socioeconomic development in comparison to other regions of Greece, including isolation, poor investment and market accessibility, lack of innovation and entrepreneurship, inadequate infrastructure and amenities, migratory patterns, and scarcity of human resources.

The Regional Unit of Rodopi is located geographically north of Greece, 745 km away from Athens, the capital of Greece, without rail or air connections. The area is dominated by the Rodopi mountain range, and one-third of its territory is mountainous. The Regional Unit of Rodopi consists of four Municipalities and 12 Municipality Units (Figure 1a,b, Table 1). The study area includes 89 selected settlements with a population of less than 5000 residents in four Municipalities of the Regional Unit of Rodopi (Table 1).

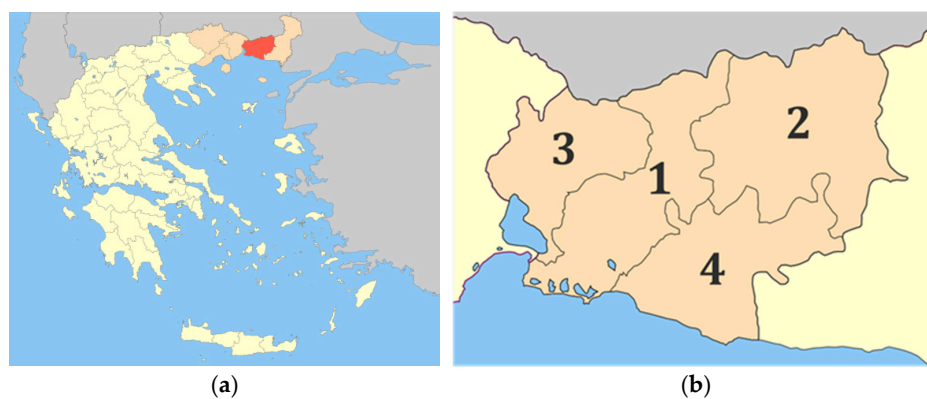


Figure 1. (a) Regional Unit of Rodopi, Region of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace, Greece; (b) Administrative Structure of the Regional Unit of Rodopi.

Table 1. Administrative Structure and Population of the Regional Unit of Rodopi.

Municipality	Municipality Unit	Population 2011	Population 2021	Settlements with a Population Less than 5000 Residents
Komotini (1)	Aigiros	3.493	2.870	10
	Komotini	60.648	60.160	11
	Neo Sidirochori	2.778	2.213	4
	Total	66.919	65.243	25
Iasmos (3)	Iasmos	5.703	4.974	3
	Sostis	6.334	5.521	7
	Amaxades	1.773	1.752	1
	Total	13.810	12.247	11
Maronia-Sapes (4)	Maronia	6.350	5.129	7
	Sapes	8.383	6.738	10
	Total	14.733	11.867	17
Ariana (2)	Ariana	5.589	5.288	14
	Filira	7.583	6.813	20
	Kechros	1.222	1.019	1
	Organi	2.183	1.785	1
	Total	16.577	14.905	36
Total		112.039	104.262	89

According to the EU urban–rural typology [70], the area under consideration is predominantly rural and has the following characteristics: low population density of fewer than 300 inhabitants per square kilometer, absence of urban centers with more than 200,000 residents, structural and economic weakness, deteriorating infrastructure that lowers the quality of life, and remote location on the periphery of national and interregional transport networks. The primary sector dominates the local economy, while the tourism sector is underperforming, with the majority of visitors traveling mostly alongside the shore in the summer. According to the relevant literature [71–73], areas with the above characteristics can be characterized as peripheral areas, and thus, the Regional Unit of Rodopi was considered an exemplary area to highlight the research methodology.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Classification of Local Traditional Cultural Industries

The first phase of the research is based on secondary research using a vast array of data about the study area's characteristics (administrative and economic features, geomorphological elements, transport infrastructure and accessibility to public transportation services) and the local cultural heritage resources provided by internet sources (e.g., digital guides, online newspapers, social media), by Chambers of Commerce, by regional and local administration authorities and document analysis (e.g., studies, published papers, official data sources, reports, and statistical data). Additionally, field research that involved numerous visits and direct observation of the settlements within the study area was conducted. Data were gathered from April 2019 to September 2022. The tangible and intangible cultural resources detected within the study area were then categorized and analyzed by the authors, following the UNESCO Framework [74] (Table 2). Cultural heritage, tangible (buildings, monuments, art, archaeological sites, etc.), intangible (folklore, traditions, language, etc.) and natural (landscapes and biodiversity), fosters a range of values, including symbolic, historical, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological, anthropological, scientific, and social significance [74,75].

Table 2. Classification of Cultural Heritage.

Category	Sub-Category	Description
Tangible Cultural Heritage	Historical monuments	In general, all the material traces related to local heritage that are significant to a community, a nation, and/or humanity.
	Archaeological Heritage	
	Architectural Heritage	
	Typical Museums	
	Non-Typical Museums	
	Private Cultural Collections	
	Ancient/Traditional Settlements	
	Traditional markets/bazaars	
	Libraries	
	Archives	
Intangible Cultural Heritage	Cultural Associations	Customs, traditional music/dance, educational, local products, and religion. Seminars on fairy tales, myths, short stories, and narrative songs. Traditional dance and music, folk theatre Revival of traditions and rituals. Workshops on basketry, ceramic, wooden crafts, knitting, jewelry, flower compositions, carving, glass, and others. Dialect workshops. Cooking classes and cooking recipes. Nature (forests, lakes, and rivers), cultural heritage (archaeological sites, monuments, churches, and castles), wine walks, and photographic routes. Writing workshop (poems, fairy tales from local myths), folklore workshop/conference (manners, customs, popular events, and other local activities) and traditional games workshop.
	Local Festivals/Fairs	
	Oral traditions and expressions	
	Arts	
	Social Practices and Rituals	
	Traditional Craft	
	Dialect	
	Local Gastronomy	
Intangible Cultural Heritage	Creative Routes/Walks	Writing workshop (poems, fairy tales from local myths), folklore workshop/conference (manners, customs, popular events, and other local activities) and traditional games workshop.
	Spirituality	

3.2.2. Conceptual Framework Used to Analyze the Data from the Study

It is important to learn more about the key determinants of formal and informal networks of CCIs, analyzing the entrepreneurial dimension and social capital. More specifically, the framework of this study consists of two main synergistic concepts: (a) Formal networking related to the following Entrepreneurial Skills of CCIs: (i) access to funding, (ii) access to market, (iii) intellectual property rights instruments, (iv) access to knowledge, and (v) access to innovation; (b) Informal networking related to Social Capital of CCIs with the following forms: (i) structural social capital, (ii) relational social capital, and (iii) cognitive social capital [21,67] (Table 3).

The first criterion concerns Formal networking related to Entrepreneurial Skills of CCIs. Entrepreneurship is a process rather than a static phenomenon and describes an activity that entails organizing activities that did not previously exist in order to identify, evaluate, and seize opportunities to introduce new products and services, markets, procedures, and resources [76]. However, the characteristics of CCIs' entrepreneurial performance may be different from those of "regular" entrepreneurship due to "fragmented" market structure, unstable demand conditions, small-sized businesses, high failure rate, human resources more content-driven than commercial, and lack of financial resources [5].

Furthermore, entrepreneurship in peripheral areas may become "embedded" within the community, and a range of factors and conditions may impact and shape both the volume and form of entrepreneurial activity [77,78]. The obstacles to entrepreneurship development in peripheral areas seem to include [79] constraints in access to funding, insufficient work experience and human resources skills, low levels of personal motivation,

sector-specific clustering, inadequate government regulation and an overall precarious socioeconomic structure (Table 4). Hence, synergy can be the key to addressing the aforementioned challenges of CCI's entrepreneurship expansion and to the sustainability and development of local cultural industries.

Table 3. The research framework. Synergy of CCIs.

Formal Networks related to Entrepreneurial Skills	Access to funding	Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies for searching financial sources, e.g., donations, sponsorships, EU funding
	Access to market	Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies identifying new markets
	Intellectual property rights instruments	Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies for use and manage intellectual property
	Access to knowledge	Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies for access to education, skills and training
	Access to innovation	Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies for access to innovation
Informal Networks related to Social Capital	Structural social capital	Network diversity Hierarchy Network ties
	Relational social capital	Social connections and ties with close acquaintances (e.g., family members and colleagues at work) Social connections and ties with various external stakeholders (e.g., executives from other businesses, board members, political leaders, government bureaucratic officials, and community leaders) Trust
	Cognitive social capital	Shared norms, values and obligation Reciprocity Shared goals and mission Attitudes and beliefs

Table 4. Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Skills.

Finance	Funds to finance endeavors play an important role during all phases of the entrepreneurial life cycle and directly affect business performance
Market access	Knowledge about market opportunities and unpredictable demand conditions, market access for all cultural and creative actors guarantee pluralism and a real economy of diversity
Intellectual property rights instruments	Formal and informal rights, regulatory issues (tax, intellectual property, labor, social welfare, business start-up), content protection, legal exceptions, and exclusive rights. Most commonly used instruments: patent, registration design, trademarks, copyright, confidentiality, and open-access licensing
Knowledge	Education, skills, training, lifelong learning initiatives, vocational training, and business courses
Innovation	Scientific innovation, soft innovation, hidden innovation, and internal innovation

The second criterion concerns Informal Networking related to the Social Capital of CCIs. The distinction between structural, relational, and cognitive social capital lies at the heart of the three-dimensional concept of social capital used in this study [67] (Table 5). Social capital, broadly defined as the establishment and maintenance of networks as well as the behavioral standards that promote them, is considered a fundamental resource for effective collaboration in order to achieve a common objective and as a useful tool for entrepreneurship performance [80–82]. “Strong ties” with family and friends are beneficial for individuals and can build strong trust. Businesses can also benefit from having “weak ties” with acquaintances, customers, suppliers, or colleagues. Social capital facilitates information sharing and collective action, establishes procedures, social structures and norms, strengthens communities, and boosts regional development. Even though several studies have examined the positive effects of social capital in various fields, such as economy, regional development, tourism development, and entrepreneurship, it is still difficult for academics to define, quantify, and categorize relevant social capital measurements [83]. In the context of this study, social capital refers “to the degree of connectedness and the quality and quantity of social relations in a given population or the social relations that lead to constructive outcomes for a group” [84].

Table 5. Dimensions of Social Capital.

Structural dimensions	Network diversity	The diversity of membership (kindship, religion, gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, education, and political affiliations)
	Hierarchy	The extent of democratic functioning
Relational dimensions	Network ties	strong ties, weak ties, government officials ties, tie strength, bonding ties, bridging ties, linking ties, and structural holes
	Social connections and ties with close acquaintances	Interpersonal skills that bind together, providing emotional or practical benefits to everyone involved (family members, friends, and colleagues at work)
	Social connections and ties with various external stakeholders	Interpersonal skills that bind together, providing emotional or practical benefits to everyone involved (executives from other businesses, board members, political leaders, government bureaucratic officials, and community leaders)
	Trust	Trust among team members, i.e., the trait of believing in the honesty and reliability of others
Cognitive dimensions	Shared norms, values and obligation	Shared standards and informal rules of acceptable behavior by groups
	Reciprocity	A situation or relationship in which two people or groups agree to do something similar for each other
	Shared goals and mission	The collective aspirations that promote a sense of shared destiny with others and align the same mission
	Attitudes and beliefs	A set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing, or event

3.2.3. Data: Collection and Analysis

In the second phase of the research, a primary field research survey with structured interviews was conducted to gauge perceptions concerning synergies at mapped CCIs

using the Likert [85] scale technique. The selected study area comprised eighty-nine (89) settlements with a population of less than 5000 residents, where two hundred and forty-four (244) CCIs have been recorded (stage one). In total, seventy-eight (78) representatives of CCIs responded and were interviewed, representing the core stakeholder categories of local heritage resources, which include entrepreneurs, representatives of local authorities and cultural industries. A structured questionnaire was developed for the interviews and adapted according to the previously identified characteristics of formal and informal networks. The report, *The Entrepreneurial Dimension of the Cultural and Creative Industries*, by Utrecht School of the Arts in the Netherlands, prepared for the European Commission Education & Culture Unit [21], and the working paper, *Measuring Social Capital—An Integrated Questionnaire*, by the World Bank [86] also served as sources of information for the development of the interview methodology. The questionnaire consists of twenty (20) questions, divided into two sections. The first section consists of five (5) questions related to the Entrepreneurial Skills of CCIs and ten (10) questions related to Social Capital. The second section consists of five (5) questions about the demographic characteristics of the respondents (age, gender, professional status, level of education, studies related to arts and culture). The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all important” (point 1) to “extremely important” (point 5) (Table 6). Data were collected from December 2022 to August 2023.

Table 6. List of Research Questions/Statements.

<p style="text-align: center;">How important do you consider the following statements regarding synergy patterns for the sustainability and development of your organization/institution/business?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Please rate your opinion on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1—Not at all important to 5—Extremely important)</p>		
Formal Networks related to Entrepreneurial Skills (FN)	<p>Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies for searching financial sources, e.g., donations, sponsorships, and European programs.</p> <p>Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies identifying new markets.</p> <p>Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies for use and manage intellectual property.</p> <p>Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies for access to education, skills, and training.</p> <p>Joint actions with cultural and non-cultural bodies for access to innovation.</p>	<p>Access to funding</p> <p>Access to market</p> <p>Intellectual property rights instruments</p> <p>Access to knowledge</p> <p>Access to innovation</p>
Informal Networks related to Social Capital (IN)	<p>Network diversity.</p> <p>Hierarchy.</p> <p>Network ties.</p> <p>Social connections and ties with close acquaintances (e.g., family members and colleagues at work).</p> <p>Social connections and ties with various external stakeholders, e.g., executives from other businesses, board members, political leaders, government bureaucratic officials and community leaders).</p> <p>Trust.</p> <p>Shared norms, values, and obligation.</p> <p>Reciprocity.</p> <p>Shared goals and mission.</p> <p>Attitudes and beliefs.</p>	<p>Network diversity</p> <p>Hierarchy</p> <p>Network ties</p> <p>Social connections and ties with close acquaintances</p> <p>Social connections and ties with various external stakeholders</p> <p>Trust</p> <p>Shared norms, values, and obligation</p> <p>Reciprocity</p> <p>Shared goals and mission</p> <p>Attitudes and beliefs</p>

The primary field research survey results were then subjected to a secondary analysis using a Relative Importance Index approach to determine the relative relevance of sustainable criteria, given that using parametric methods for analyzing respondent preferences/attitudes is neither acceptable nor practicable. Relative Importance Index (RII) is a non-parametric technique employed to ascertain how each dependent variable is regarded as relatively important by the participants [87,88]. RII is calculated using the following formula:

$$RII = \sum \frac{W}{A * N} \quad (1)$$

where:

W = weighting that is assigned to each variable by each respondent on a scale of one to five, with one implying the least (not at all important—point 1) and five the highest (extremely important—point 5),

A = highest weight = 5,

N = total number of respondents.

The RII value ranges from 0 to 1, and it states that the higher the value, the more important the criterion is and vice versa. Chen et al. [89] proposed a transformation matrix in order to compare RII scores with the corresponding importance level (Table 7):

Table 7. Importance Level from RII.

High (H)	$0.8 \leq RII \leq 1$
High-Medium (H-M)	$0.6 \leq RII \leq 0.8$
Medium (M)	$0.4 \leq RII \leq 0.6$
Medium-Low (M-L)	$0.2 \leq RII \leq 0.4$
Low (L)	$0 \leq RII \leq 0.2$

4. Results

4.1. Profile of CCIs within the Study Area

The analysis reveals that the development of selected settlements in the Regional Unit of Rodopi depends heavily on CCIs and heritage. The findings of primary and secondary research highlight a peripheral area with rich cultural heritage and local traditions that are, however, mostly unexplored. The majority of CCIs within the study area were public enterprises and associations or small-sized businesses with no more than three regular employees; 97% of the observed cases operated as legal forms of public enterprises or associations. Figure 2 shows that the three categories of cultural heritage with the strongest dynamics are “Local Fairs/Festivals” with a percentage of 30.73% of the total, “Cultural Associations” with a percentage of 18%, and “Non-Typical Museums” with a percentage of 13.5%. The following categories of cultural heritage are “Archaeological Heritage”, with a percentage of 12.29%, “Archives” with a percentage of 11.47%, and “Historical monuments” with a percentage of 9.01%. The categories “Private Collections” and “Libraries” register rather low percentages and have limited dynamics (0.4% and 0.4%, respectively).

According to ICOM [90], “A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing”. Within the context of this definition, museums may include but are not limited to (a) non-profit institutions or organizations undertaking conservation research, education, training, documentation, and other activities related to museums and museology and (b) cultural centers and other entities that support the preservation, continuation and management of tangible and intangible heritage resources (living heritage and digital creative activity) [91]. The term “Non-Typical Museums” is a neologism used in this research to refer to the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Cultural Associations and Private Collections within the study area. These collections

are permanent, open to the public, and used for conservation, research, communication, and exhibition of both tangible and intangible heritage, although they are not listed in the official register of the Ministry of Culture [92]. The Non-Typical Museums of the study area include the following categories of cultural heritage: (a) Tangible Cultural Heritage Collections (Photographic Collection, Pre-industrial Tools, Household Objects, and Traditional Costumes), (b) Intangible Cultural Heritage Collections (Manners and Customs and Culinary Habits), (c) Archives, and (d) Libraries [93].

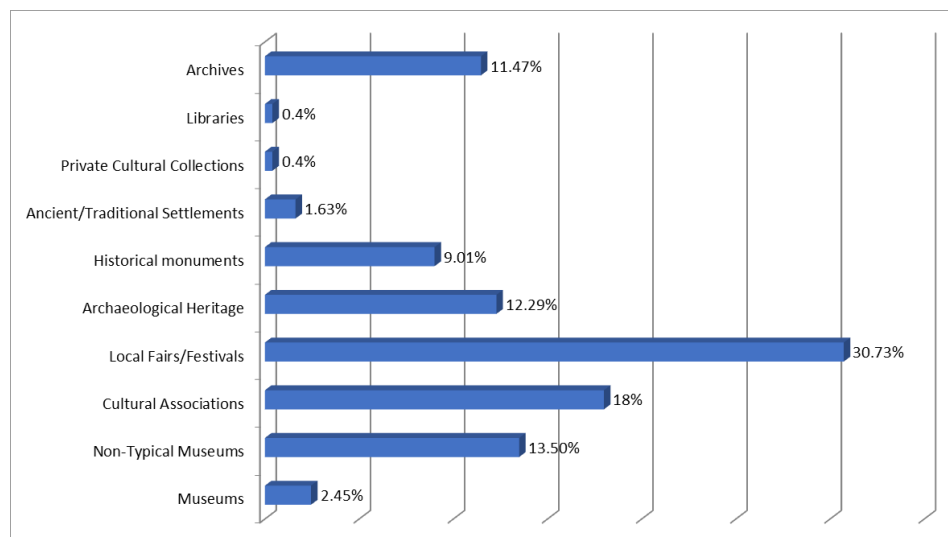


Figure 2. Cultural industries within the study area.

The study revealed disparities in terms of the spatial distribution of traditional cultural industries among the municipalities under investigation. The Municipality of Komotini gathers the majority of cultural heritage resources due to its administrative profile, which is the capital city of the Regional Unit, accessibility, tourism infrastructure, and diverse development stakeholders, including business planners and policymakers. Conversely, the Municipality of Ariana exhibits poor performance of traditional cultural industries, with a mere 2% of the total. This can be attributed to various factors such as geomorphological features (being mountainous and remote from the capital of the Regional Unit), connectivity and accessibility factors (poor road conditions and inadequate public transportation links, which leave several settlements without daily public transportation connections) and sociohistorical and cultural conditions (Figure 3).

Furthermore, according to the survey results, the most dynamic category of traditional cultural industries is “Local Fairs/Festivals”, consisting of the following sub-categories [93,94]: (a) Cultural, Customs, (b) Cultural, Traditional Music/Dance, (c) Cultural, Educational, (d) Cultural, Local Products, and (e) Cultural, Religious. Research findings show that “Cultural, Religious Fairs/Festivals” and “Cultural, Customs Fairs/Festivals” are dominant, while “Cultural, Educational Fairs/Festivals” and “Cultural, Local Products Fairs/Festivals” have low potential (Figure 4).

Concerning cultural employment, two cases are observed in traditional cultural industries: a small percentage of employees (12%) have culturally relevant professional expertise (e.g., museologists, architects, and librarians), while a percentage of 88% of employees have other specialties (e.g., business administration, economists, and civil engineers). Also noteworthy is the fact that voluntary work dominates in traditional cultural industries. More specifically, in the following categories of CCIs with the highest cultural dynamics, “Local Fairs/Festivals”, “Non-Typical Museums”, and “Cultural Associations”, volunteer work is exclusively recorded without permanent or seasonal employees.

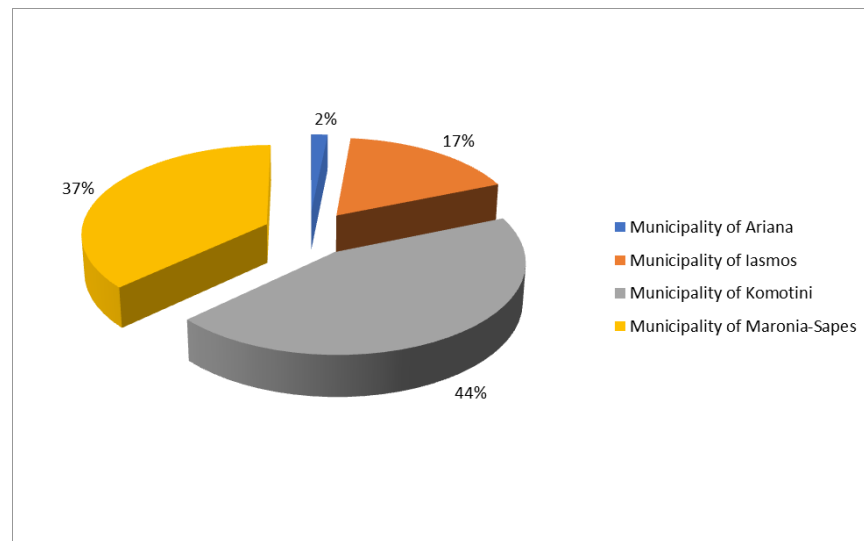


Figure 3. Spatial distribution of cultural industries within the study area.

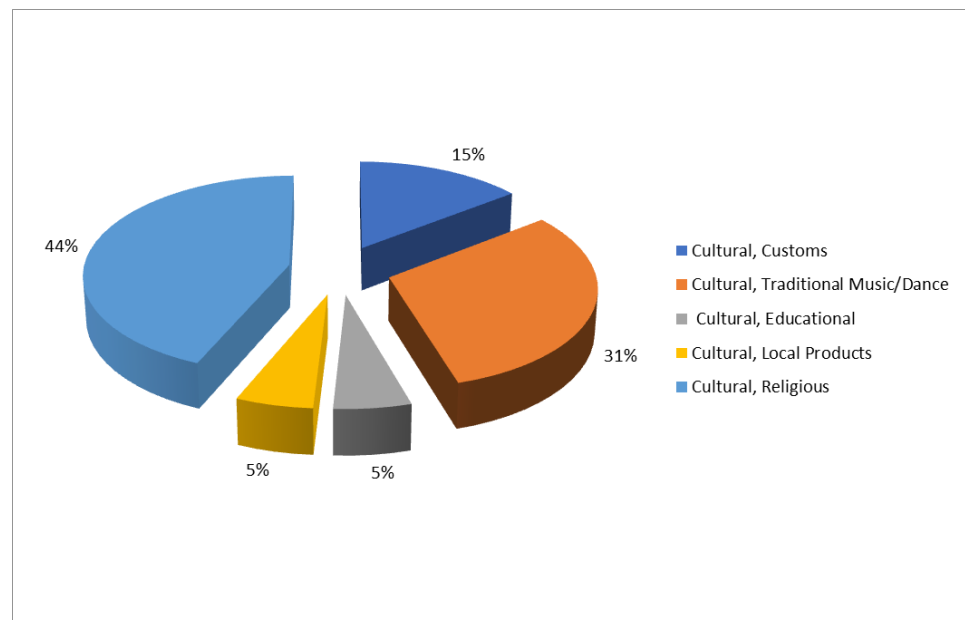


Figure 4. Local Fairs/Festivals within the study area.

4.2. Synergy Patterns of CCIs within the Study Area

The primary goal of this research is to further explore synergy patterns and networking practices in traditional cultural industries. These theories are crucial tools for development strategies that encourage the diffusion of innovation, creativity, information sharing, exchange of experiences, and best practices. The analysis combines formal networking through entrepreneurial practices and informal networking through social capital to the network theory of the cultural sector.

Networking fosters links between individuals, groups, and regions and can have a significant impact on local development. It is essential for enhancing cooperation, innovation and creativity, as well as for sharing knowledge and skills, building a trusting environment and producing spillover effects [8,95]. In particular, networking is considered an essential instrument for growth in peripheral areas where connections and links are made with the primary goal of exchanging knowledge and practices with an emphasis on tacit knowledge [96].

This section presents the main trends and perceptions of respondents on the importance of synergy types in traditional cultural industries within the study area based on the interviews conducted. A relative index analysis was used to rank the criteria according to their relative importance. By using the relative index analysis in Equation (1), the ranking results for two key determinants of formal and informal networks are presented in Table 8. Based on the ranking results, eight criteria were identified to have high importance levels, with an RI value between 0.979 and 0.846; five criteria to have high–Medium important levels, with an RI value between 0.784 and 0.731 and two criteria to have medium important levels with an RI value 0.505 and 0.482 relatively.

As presented in Table 8, in the category of High-Importance level, we notice that the highest ranking of key determinants of synergy development of CCIs is sub-criteria “Social connections and ties with close acquaintances”. Then follow sub-criteria “Social connections and ties with various external stakeholders”, “Shared norms, values and obligation”, “Trust”, “Access to funding”, “Shared goals and mission”, and “Attitudes and beliefs”. The last sub-criterion ranked under this category is “Network ties”. In the High–Medium importance level category, the highest ranking of key determinants of synergy development of CCIs is sub-criteria “Access to knowledge”, then followed by sub-criteria “Hierarchy”, “Access to innovation” and “Network diversity”. The last importance level criterion ranked is “Reciprocity”. Finally, in the category of Medium importance level, “Access to market” and “Intellectual property rights instruments” are identified.

Table 8. The ranking results of perceptions of cultural stakeholders for each key determinant of synergy development.

ID	Sub Criteria	Relative Index	Ranking by Category	Overall Ranking	Importance Level
FN_1	Access to funding	0.925	1	5	H
FN_2	Access to market	0.505	4	14	M
FN_3	Intellectual property rights instruments	0.482	5	15	M
FN_4	Access to knowledge	0.784	2	9	H–M
FN_5	Access to innovation	0.776	3	11	H–M
IN_1	Network diversity	0.771	9	12	H–M
IN_2	Hierarchy	0.782	8	10	H–M
IN_3	Network ties	0.846	7	8	H
IN_4	Social connections and ties with close acquaintances	0.979	1	1	H
IN_5	Social connections and ties with various external stakeholders	0.948	2	2	H
IN_6	Trust	0.931	4	4	H
IN_7	Shared norms, values and obligation	0.935	3	3	H
IN_8	Reciprocity	0.731	10	13	H–M
IN_9	Shared goals and mission	0.892	5	6	H
IN_10	Attitudes and beliefs	0.879	6	7	H

Research results show that for the development of synergy in CCIs in peripheral areas, cultural stakeholders assigned more significance to Informal Networking through Social Capital dimensions and, in particular to “Social connections and ties with close acquaintances and external stakeholders, Shared norms, values and obligation, Trust, Shared goals and mission, Attitudes and beliefs and Network ties”. Only one category of Formal Networking through Entrepreneurial Skills was found to have a high significance level, namely “Access to funding”. Then, high–Medium importance was distributed nearly equitably among Entrepreneurial Skills and Social Capital, and cultural stakeholders gave priority to “Access to knowledge, Hierarchy, Access to innovation, Network diversity and

Reciprocity". Finally, "Access to market and Intellectual property rights instruments" were found less important.

The ranking of the criteria in the category "Formal networking" is Access to funding, Access to knowledge, Access to innovation, Access to market and Intellectual property rights instruments. The ranking of the criteria in the category "Formal networking" is Social connections and ties with close acquaintances, Social connections and ties with various external stakeholders, Shared norms, values and obligations, Trust, Shared goals and mission, Attitudes and beliefs, Network ties, Hierarchy, Network diversity, and Reciprocity.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to explore the characteristics of CCIs in peripheral areas and their synergy patterns. Traditional cultural industries in peripheral areas and their formal and informal networking are rather unexplored areas of academic research. The Regional Unit of Rodopi, in Northern Greece, is used as the study area. Although an area with rich cultural and natural heritage, it confronts various challenges due to its remote location and peripheral characteristics, such as limited private or government funding, insufficient business skills (management, promotion, and funding), lack of a formal coordinating/organizing/managing body of cultural resources, limited access to knowledge and information and inadequate national and local policies/strategies. The CCIs identified within the study area typically refer to cultural heritage, the majority being enterprises of public interest or cultural institutions/associations. The fact that volunteer activity predominates in local CCIs where there are no permanent employees is remarkable.

Regarding the aforementioned challenges, synergy/collaboration/networking appear to be tools for overcoming obstacles and empowering or strengthening CCIs' operational patterns. By participating in networking activities, CCIs can improve their position, raise their standards, strengthen their position in the market, improve their innovation process and projects, generate knowledge spillovers within the area and facilitate access to management skills. Understanding social capital is becoming increasingly important as the networking process is conditioned and influenced by social relations [97]. Social capital is defined as the relationships and interactions among individuals, groups, as well as regions. Scientific research validates that establishing relationships with others leads to better outcomes; hence, social capital becomes an intangible asset that enables the formation and development of networks. As a result, many countries and international organizations are working on policies and strategies that support and encourage the expansion of networking and the establishment of social capital at the local level.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that synergies of CCIs in peripheral areas require a comprehensive approach that addresses two key concepts: (a) Formal networking related to the Entrepreneurial Skills of CCIs and (b) Informal Networking related to the Social Capital of CCIs structural, relational, and cognitive. Regarding the ongoing debate on the topic, as indicated in the methodology section, a survey was conducted to gauge the perceptions of cultural stakeholders on key determinants that contribute to the synergy of CCIs.

The survey findings demonstrate that cultural stakeholders in peripheral areas value Social Capital more than Entrepreneurial Skills in synergy patterns. More specifically, three dimensions specifically related to Social Capital (social connections and ties with close acquaintances, with various external stakeholders and trust) follow the cognitive dimensions (shared norms, values and obligation, shared goals and mission, attitudes, and beliefs) and are very important. Through collective action, a group with high levels of Trust, Social connections and Ties can resolve problems effectively. Regarding the "Formal Networking" category, the majority of respondents agreed that access to funding is a particularly important factor. It appears that the sub-categories "Access to market" and "Intellectual property rights instruments" are less significant for local cultural stakeholders. This seems to confirm the peripheral character of the area and the fact that cultural stakeholders work on a voluntary basis without having special managerial skills in arts and culture. In conclu-

sion, the synergy of traditional cultural industries in peripheral areas depends mainly on social capital rather than on entrepreneurial practices and plays a key role in overcoming the particular challenges that peripheral areas face. Undoubtedly, peripheral remote areas need to recognize that CCIs can contribute to local development through the multiplier effects, so it is imperative to incorporate them into local strategies/policies [98].

In the relevant academic literature, there is a lack of knowledge about the function patterns of CCIs in peripheral areas. The significance of the findings of this study lies in expanding our understanding of the synergy patterns of CCIs in peripheral areas. Moreover, this study expands our knowledge about the nature of synergy types in both Formal and Informal networking and develops new awareness and practice for the benefit of CCIs. Additionally, results strengthen the position that CCIs require for certain policymaking [99,100], especially in peripheral areas that confront particular challenges. This study can offer ground for novel insights to enhance the territory's development and contribute to overcoming local problems. In addition, the identification and classification of local cultural heritage can form the basis for further discussions on determining a common definition for CCIs and expanding the NACE classification according to the nature of the area's cultural and natural heritage.

This study revealed the need for development policy and strategy for CCIs in peripheral areas for the industry to thrive. It may also be beneficial to create an effective framework for managing cultural resources and establish an official body for the coordination/organization/management of the region's CCIs. Furthermore, it is critical to teach entrepreneurial skills to local cultural stakeholders and provide managerial skills through specialized training programs. Moreover, local authorities need training programs on social capital management. Future research can be conducted to better understand and investigate the synergy patterns between rural and urban communities in peripheral areas, exploring the fundamental trends and aspects of formal and informal networking of CCIs in various sectors of the economy, such as tourism.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, S.M. and S.K.; methodology, S.M. and S.K.; software, S.M.; validation, S.M. and S.K.; formal analysis, S.M.; investigation, S.M.; resources, S.M. and S.K.; data curation, S.M.; writing—original draft preparation, S.M. and S.K.; writing—review and editing, S.K.; visualization, S.M.; supervision, S.K.; project administration, S.M. and S.K.; funding acquisition, S.M. and S.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors upon request.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to thank all the respondents who cooperatively answered the questionnaires.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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