



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



Cultural Entrepreneurship in Capri and Casa Malaparte

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2025, 16(02), 349-356

Publication history: Received on 25 June 2025; revised on 02 August 2025; accepted on 04 August 2025

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2025.16.2.2311>

Abstract

Casa Malaparte in Capri is a unique example of cultural entrepreneurship, where Curzio Malaparte's personal vision meets innovative architecture and philosophical inquiry. It is not just a residence, but a cultural project, a symbol of contemplative isolation and freedom, combining art, lifestyle, and ascetic pleasure. Casa Malaparte embodies a form of cultural entrepreneurship focused on timeless value and personal expression, as opposed to economic return. Through its rejection of convention and its confrontation with nature and tradition, it has become a cultural landmark and a life's work.

Keywords: Curzio Malaparte; Casa Malaparte; Cultural entrepreneurship; Capri

1. Introduction

Casa Malaparte began as a collaboration between the renowned Italian rationalist architect Adalberto Libera and the writer Curzio Malaparte. However, the partnership quickly deteriorated, as Malaparte rejected Libera's initial design, which he viewed as overly rational and cold—a "prison" incompatible with the Mediterranean spirit and character (Sels, 2015).

Taking control of the construction himself, with the assistance of local craftsman Adolfo Amitrano, Malaparte transformed the project into a wholly personal endeavor. The final result is not merely a residence, but a manifesto—perched on a steep cliff 32 meters above the Tyrrhenian Sea, with a panoramic view of the Gulf of Salerno (Molè, 2022; Talamona, 1990).

Casa Malaparte represents a peculiar form of cultural entrepreneurship, where the creation, dissemination, and use of cultural goods is not directed toward commercialization, but toward radical self-expression and the affirmation of cultural identity. Malaparte famously described the house as a "portrait in stone," underlining his desire for architecture that embodies both personal and cultural identity (Sels, 2015; Mascha & Apostolakis, 2020).

Thus, Casa Malaparte functions not only as a home but as a symbol of cultural innovation that transcends conventional purpose, incorporating strong personal and philosophical dimensions (Strandvad, Davis & Dunn, 2022).

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2. Architecture as Cultural Manifesto

Casa Malaparte stands as a powerful architectural and cultural manifesto, where geometric austerity coexists with rich symbolism and deep personal expression. Dominating the eastern cliffs of Capri, it takes the form of a striking Pompeii-red parallelepiped (Moormann, 2018). Its austere geometry, interwoven with improvisational elements and personal design choices, makes it a unique case of existential architecture (Sánchez Noriega, 2017).

The inverted pyramid staircase leading to the trapezoidal rooftop terrace—framed by a curved white wall—functions both as protection from the wind and as a sculptural, spiritual enclosure (Iacovou, 2024). The form, evoking the staircase of the Church of the Annunciation in Lipari, suggests spiritual elevation and a metaphysical bridge between heaven and earth, turning the house into a place of existential reflection (Molè, 2022).

The use of marbled mortar in Pompeii red, rather than conventional concrete, integrates the house organically into its rocky setting, confirming the dialogue between architecture and nature as well as a deep link to the area's historical memory (Moormann, 2018; Bergera & Jerez Abajo, 2019).

Internally, Casa Malaparte blends romantic sensibility, archaic grandeur, and modernist austerity. The Pompeian marble bathrooms, wooden living room ceiling, and wall paintings inspired by Pericle Fazzini create a timeless aesthetic. The fireplace—featuring a transparent wall of Zeiss Jena glass that allows one to see the sea through the flames—adds a theatrical element that unites nature, fire, and architectural experience (Architectural Digest, 2012).

Despite its modernist visual language, Casa Malaparte subverts the principles of modernist functionality, integrating elements of historical memory and classical revival in both layout and atmosphere. Nadia Sels describes it as “a spatial form of writing and thought,” where past and present are interwoven into a singular architectural narrative (Sels, 2015).

Malaparte referred to the house as a “stone portrait of himself,” and its spatial design reflects his longing for isolation and introspection. The fragmentation of service areas, the expansive rooms, and the vast openings to the landscape convey personal experiences—such as his exile in Lipari—turning the house into an existential manifesto and architectural autobiography.

Casa Malaparte is a cultural object full of creative paradoxes: austerity and extravagance, repetition and subversion, modernism and tradition, public performance and personal confession. It defies mere functionality to fulfill its creator's existential will, emerging as an architectural text carved in stone—a living monument of cultural expression and philosophical stance (ArchDaily, 2016; Iacovou, 2024).

3. Cultural Entrepreneurship and Resistance to the Established Order

Casa Malaparte exemplifies a form of alternative cultural production—cultural entrepreneurship not aimed at profit, but at producing symbolic, experiential, and cultural value. Unlike architectural projects absorbed into mass consumerism and tourism, Casa Malaparte emerges as a personal cultural manifesto. It rejects modernism's normative aesthetics, resists tourist commodification, and instead becomes a landscape of creative and existential isolation (Sels, 2015; Molè, 2022).

Malaparte acts not merely as an architect, but as a cultural entrepreneur: he transforms an individual vision into a unique, non-replicable cultural artifact of enduring significance and symbolic weight. His rejection of Libera's design, the personal appropriation of the Capri landscape, and the embedding of the house in narratives of exile, freedom, and truth constitute a form of resistance to the normative and the commercially viable.

This model aligns with theoretical perspectives by Maniou and colleagues (2024c), who describe cultural entrepreneurship as a driver for sustainable cultural development. Casa Malaparte can be interpreted through this lens, incorporating strategies similar to those found in literary parks, local identity-building actions, and non-profit cultural initiatives. Relevant studies on Italian literary parks (Maniou, Mitoula & Manola, 2024), Ottoman heritage sites on Lesbos (Maniou, 2024b), and cultural narratives as alternatives to tourist branding (Maniou et al., 2025) offer tools for interpreting Malaparte's project as a form of alternative cultural entrepreneurship.

Like the examples explored in Maniou's research, Casa Malaparte rejects market conformity. It is not consumed but contemplated; not exhibited but provoking; not commodified but preserved as a legacy of cultural disobedience. Its

material form converses with myth and memory, while its geographical isolation underscores a distinct cultural identity that resists mass reproduction.

As Maniou et al. (2025) observe in their work on Ottoman monuments and digital heritage, modern cultural entrepreneurship may adopt hybrid forms—embedding symbolism in space and blending tradition with innovation. Casa Malaparte exemplifies such hybridity: a site where aesthetics, memory, place, and identity coalesce not into a consumer object, but into a symbolic act of cultural survival.

Architecture and Culture along with digital technologies and the Internet enhances the ability to present to larger audiences the identity of a place to attract tourism. This is done by digital marketing as well as via education. So, concluding this section we underline the importance of digital technologies within the education sector and for training in cultural entrepreneurship. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) facilitate education for all, introduce innovative approaches for effective teacher training, enhance knowledge retention, promote collaboration, increase transparency, foster learner-centered methodologies, create novel teaching strategies, and expedite knowledge acquisition. Additionally, they offer new means for knowledge representation and support educational activities and techniques through mobility, virtualization, artificial intelligence, and new learning environments. Specifically, in entrepreneurship training, ICTs have proven to be highly effective, improving assessment, interventions, and educational processes via mobile devices [24-26], which enable educational activities to take place anywhere, as well as through various ICT applications [27-31], that are fundamental to education. The utilization of AI, STEM, and robotics [32-35], elevates educational processes to new heights of adaptability, innovation, and effectiveness, while gaming transforms education into a multisensory, engaging, and enjoyable experience. Furthermore, the integration and enhancement of ICTs with theories and frameworks of metacognition, mindfulness, meditation, and emotional intelligence development [36-49], bring mental capabilities to the forefront of educational processes and policies, thereby further enhancing educational practices and outcomes, particularly in business and training for new cultural entrepreneurs.

4. Comparative Analysis: Casa Malaparte and Other Cases of Cultural Entrepreneurship

Casa Malaparte exemplifies a form of cultural entrepreneurship that radically diverges from commercial logic, prioritizing cultural accomplishment, experiential depth, and narrative resistance. Its singular location, the improvisational nature of its architecture, and its profound existential charge create a space designed not to be consumed, but to be experienced as a cultural event. This model of non-commercial creation finds parallels in other cases where space and memory are reinterpreted to elevate cultural heritage as a medium of identity and storytelling.

As noted by Maniou, Mitoula, and Manola (2024), Eugenio Montale Park is a prime example of a literary landscape transformed into an experiential, rather than a consumable, space. Rather than functioning as a tourist brand, the park emphasizes the author as a bearer of cultural value—much like Casa Malaparte, which incorporates the island of Capri into Malaparte's personal mythology. In both cases, space becomes narrative: Casa Malaparte as an architectural "poem," and the literary park as a transmutation of memory into experiential landscape. Both are instances of high cultural entrepreneurship that transcend commercial frameworks.

A similar dynamic appears in Maniou's study (2024b) of the Ottoman monuments of Lesbos, where sites with historical and emotional complexity are reinterpreted, evolving from sources of ambivalence into platforms for intercultural dialogue, tolerance, and aesthetic sustainability. Just as Casa Malaparte represents intellectual autonomy and resistance, these monuments recover narrative power through hybrid practices, allowing the coexistence of multiple identities within the same spatial frame.

The case of Elefsina as the 2023 European Capital of Culture also aligns with this paradigm of alternative cultural entrepreneurship. As analyzed by Maniou, Mitoula, and Kostakis (2024), Elefsina leverages its local history and industrial heritage as grounds for contemporary artistic expression. The myth of Demeter and Persephone serves as a symbolic framework for modern experience, much like Casa Malaparte transforms geographical isolation into an existential narrative. In both instances, time, myth, and materiality are recontextualized as fields of cultural production and collective memory.

Casa Malaparte's architecture has often been likened to a poetic body—a "text" of stone, glass, and landscape—evoking silence, singularity, and artistic introspection. As Molè (2022) observes, Malaparte viewed his home as a self-portrait, an autobiographical manifesto cast in the form of a dwelling. In this respect, Casa Malaparte functions similarly to a literary festival or a thematic cultural park: it tells a story with structure and substance; it cannot be copied or expanded;

and above all, it cannot be commodified. It exists as a singular cultural trace that preserves memory, fosters aesthetic experience, and embodies cultural disobedience—not as a product, but as a process imbued with meaning.

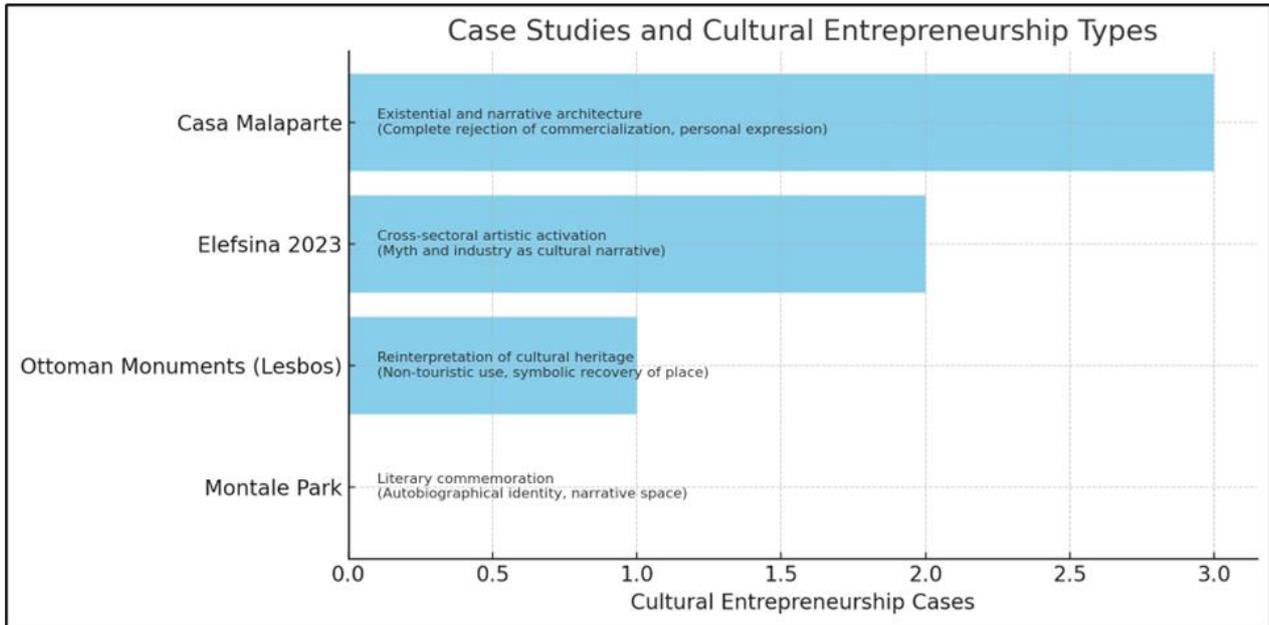


Figure 1 Case Studies

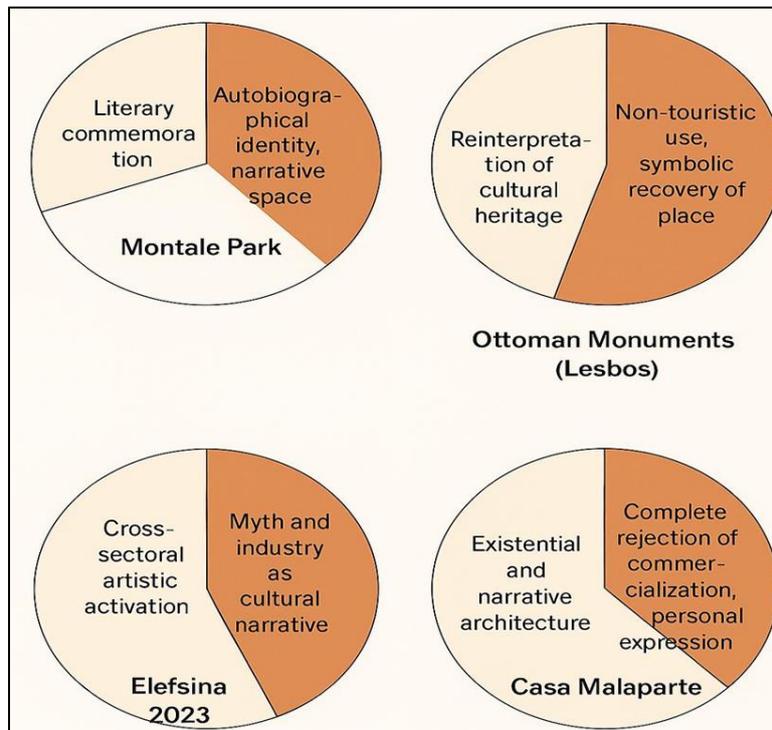


Figure 2 Similarities with Casa Malaparte

Table 1 Summary Table

Case Study	Type of Cultural Entrepreneurship	Similarities with Casa Malaparte
Montale Park	Literary commemoration	Autobiographical identity, narrative space
Ottoman Monuments (Lesbos)	Reinterpretation of cultural heritage	Non-touristic use, symbolic recovery of place
Elefsina 2023	Cross-sectoral artistic activation	Myth and industry as cultural narrative
Casa Malaparte	Existential and narrative architecture	Complete rejection of commercialization, personal expression

5. Capri and Curzio Malaparte: Cultural and Literary Connections

The island of Capri, known for its exceptional natural beauty and rich historical and cultural background, became a focal point for numerous artists and intellectuals during the 20th century. Curzio Malaparte, a distinguished Italian writer and thinker, lived and created on Capri, where he built the iconic Casa Malaparte—a residence that mirrors his personality and cultural vision. Casa Malaparte is more than an architectural landmark; it is a symbol of cultural expression and personal narrative, inseparably linked to the Mediterranean landscape and ethos (Sels, 2015; Molè, 2022).

The relationship between Malaparte's literary identity and the island of Capri can be viewed through the broader lens of cultural itineraries and the role of place in fostering cultural entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism (Manola, 2023; Maniou, Manola & Alexopoulou, 2023). Capri's unique history and landscape have long attracted artistic and intellectual production, as demonstrated in Malaparte's case.

Beyond his personal and artistic legacy, research into Capri and its associated literary figures reveals important socio-cultural dynamics, highlighting how local communities, heritage, and sustainability intersect through cultural entrepreneurship (Manola & Tsatalbassoglou, 2023; Maniou, Mitoula & Manola, 2024).

Overall, the case of Malaparte and Capri offers a model for integrating literature, identity, and architecture while also demonstrating the potential of cultural heritage to support innovative forms of tourism and creative economy (Manola, 2022a; Manola, 2022b; Maniou et al., 2024).

6. Conclusion

Casa Malaparte is far more than an architectural feat—it is a site of narrative, a spatial expression where architecture meets philosophy and cultural purpose. Much like the thematic cultural structures discussed by Maniou (2023, 2024)—festivals, monuments, landscapes with historical depth—Casa Malaparte exemplifies symbolic and intangible cultural value.

It stands as a pure expression of cultural entrepreneurship, in which Curzio Malaparte's personal vision becomes a cultural project that resists convention. The house is not intended for profit, but for enduring cultural relevance. It is a site of ascetic pleasure, creative solitude, and existential inquiry.

Casa Malaparte rejects the norms of both mainstream architecture and conventional entrepreneurship, embodying a form of anti-systemic cultural production. Its architecture is stark and uncompromising, engaged in dialogue with both the natural landscape and historical tradition. It generates a cultural identity rooted in memory, self-expression, and artistic freedom.

Through radical non-conformity and the integration of art, nature, and philosophy, Casa Malaparte becomes a living cultural act—an alternative model of entrepreneurship that serves culture rather than capital.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

The Authors would like to thank the SPECIALIZATION IN ICTs AND SPECIAL EDUCATION: PSYCHOPEDAGOGY OF INCLUSION Postgraduate studies Team, for their support.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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