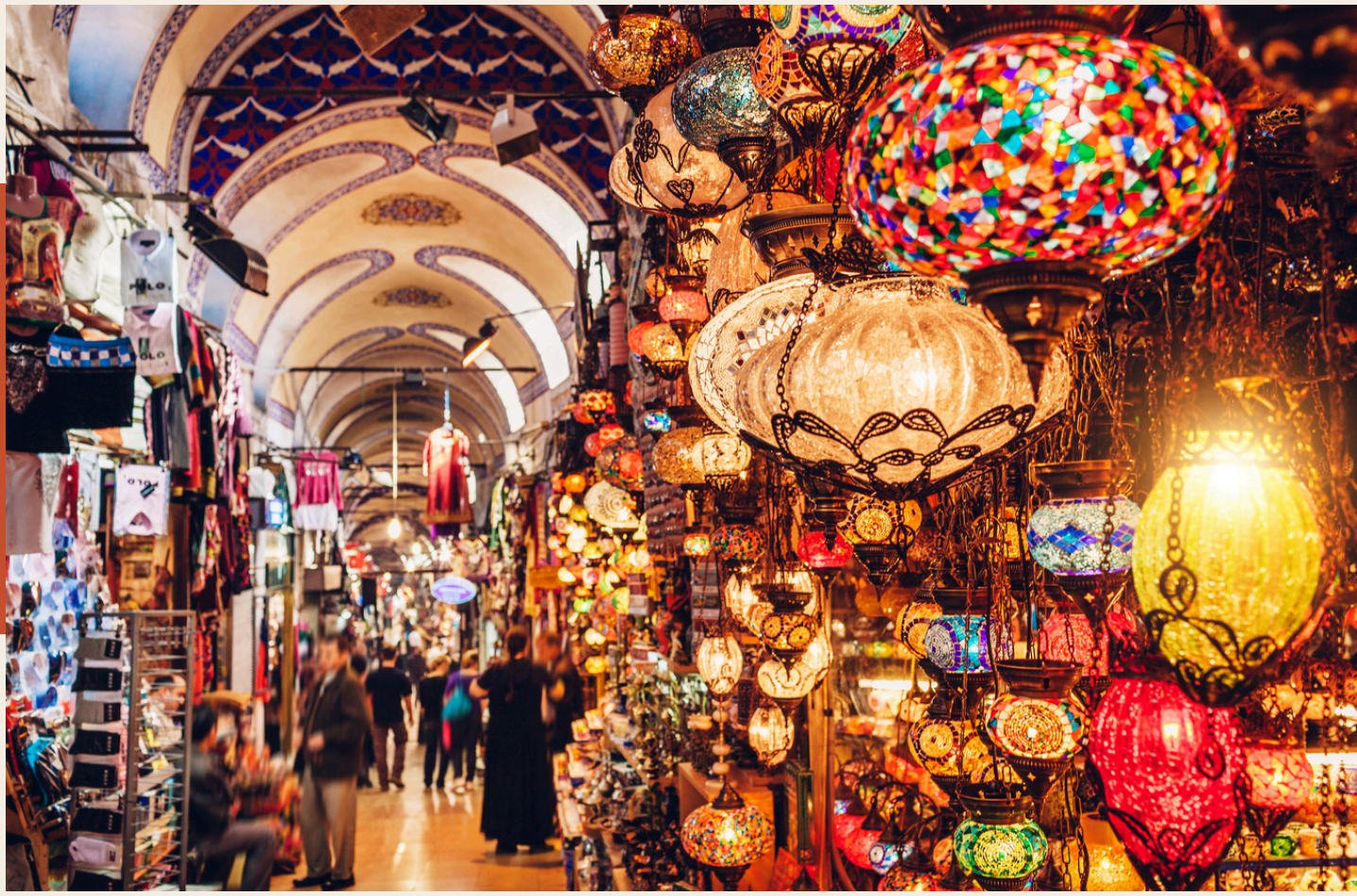
22nd INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FORUM CONFERENCE



Entrepreneurship, Values, and Wellbeing in the Age of AI

An Introduction

Istanbul, Turkey

14-16 September 2026

www.iefconference.org

contact@iefplatform.com

An Introduction to the Conference

The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) across economic, organisational, and social systems is reshaping the nature of entrepreneurship, the values that underpin entrepreneurial action, and the well-being of individuals and societies. As AI is now embedded in decision-making, production, and creative processes, creating unprecedented opportunities while introducing profound ethical, psychological, and societal challenges.

Beyond AI, the escalating frequency and severity of conflicts and wars worldwide are compounding the uncertainty that influences entrepreneurial endeavour. Together, these forces — technological disruption, geopolitical instability, the fragmentation of institutions, climate change and the polarisation of communities — are converging to create an environment of heightened complexity, placing entrepreneurial exchange and well-being under growing, multidimensional pressure.

The 22nd International Entrepreneurship Forum conference will provide a platform for scholarly, practitioner, and policy perspectives to deepen our understanding and analysis of how AI is transforming entrepreneurial ecosystems. We aim to do this not only with reference to technological complexities but also to the growing levels of economic, and social uncertainty, the scrutiny of values and what all that means for human flourishing and economic, organisational, and social development.

The conference will explore six key themes:

1. AI as a Transformational Catalyst for Entrepreneurial Opportunity
2. Entrepreneurial Adaptation and Co-Evolution with AI, Technological Change, and Economic and Social Uncertainties
3. Individual and Organisational Wellbeing and Entrepreneurial Resilience
4. Gendering Entrepreneurship in the Age of AI - Opportunities, Inclusion, and Support
5. Entrepreneurial Ethics and Values in the Age of AI
6. Societal Wellbeing and the Broader Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in an Era of Unprecedented Uncertainty

An Introduction to the Sub-themes

Theme 1 - AI as a Transformational Catalyst for Entrepreneurial Opportunity

AI technologies—including generative AI, machine learning, natural language processing, robotics, and the Internet of Things — are widely recognised as catalysts for new entrepreneurial opportunities. Scholars such as Cockburn, Henderson and Stern (2018) argue that AI functions as a "general-purpose technology," reshaping innovation systems and enabling new forms of economic activity. AI can be construed as a structural force rather than a mere add-on to organisational, economic, and social agendas for change.

Four key factors can be taken into consideration in understanding the direction of AI travel in the context of entrepreneurial endeavour and wellbeing:

- **Opportunity Recognition:** AI-driven analytics enhance entrepreneurs' ability to identify patterns, unmet needs, and market inefficiencies. Nambisan (2017) highlights how digital technologies fundamentally reshape entrepreneurial processes, enabling "digital entrepreneurship" characterised by rapid experimentation and data-driven insights.
- **Decision-Making:** Huang, Rust and Maksimovic (2019) propose a hierarchy of AI capabilities—from mechanical to analytical to intuitive AI—each influencing entrepreneurial decision-making differently. Analytical AI improves accuracy and reduces uncertainty, while intuitive AI begins to approximate complex human judgment.
- **Operational Efficiency and Scaling:** Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) emphasize how automation and intelligent systems increase productivity and enable scalable business models, particularly in platform-based ventures.
- **Accessibility and Democratisation:** von Briel, Davidsson and Recker (2018) show that digital technologies lower barriers to entry, enabling "lean experimentation" and rapid venture creation.

Systematic reviews—including those by Uriarte et al. (2026), Saridakis et al. (2024), and Giuggioli & Pellegrini (2023)—reinforce the view that AI positively influences entrepreneurship across opportunity identification, decision-making, performance, and education. The broader literature confirms that AI is reshaping entrepreneurial ecosystems at structural, organisational, and cognitive levels.

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Theme 2 - Entrepreneurial Adaptation and Co-Evolution with AI, Technological Change, and Economic and Social Uncertainties

Beyond its role as a discrete set of tools, artificial intelligence (AI) represents a broader process of accelerated technological change that is reshaping the pace, direction, and uncertainty of entrepreneurial activity. Recent research increasingly conceptualises AI not simply as an input to entrepreneurship, but as a general-purpose and ecosystem-level technology that reconfigures opportunity structures, entrepreneurial processes, and institutional arrangements (Obschonka and Audretsch, 2020; Roundy and Asllani, 2024; Uriarte et al., 2026). This implies that technological change is not episodic but continuous, requiring ongoing adaptation as markets, platforms, and capabilities co-evolve. We consider three dimensions of this process of technological change:

- **Technological Change and the Reconfiguration of Entrepreneurial Opportunities:** Contemporary scholarship shows that AI and related digital technologies are reshaping how entrepreneurial opportunities are discovered, evaluated, and exploited. Rather than merely supporting existing activities, AI, it is argued, is increasingly transforming the entrepreneurial process itself, compressing experimentation cycles, externalising cognition, and altering patterns of resource mobilisation (Chalmers et al., 2021; Kleinert and Vismara, 2026). Recent reviews highlight how AI enables new forms of opportunity recognition through data-driven pattern detection, simulation, and rapid iteration, while simultaneously introducing new dependencies on platforms, data infrastructures, and standards (Fossen et al., 2024; Uriarte et al., 2026). At the ecosystem level, research on AI entrepreneurial ecosystems emphasises the importance of place-based and institutional contexts in shaping who can innovate, scale, and capture value from technological change (Roundy and Asllani, 2024). These dynamics suggest that technological change does not simply democratise entrepreneurship and innovation (von Hippel, 2005) but produces bounded democratisation, in which access expands while new forms of concentration and lock-in emerge (Kleinert and Vismara, 2026) in specific environments.

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Theme 2 - Entrepreneurial Adaptation and Co-Evolution with AI, Technological Change, and Economic and Social Uncertainties (cont.)

- **Entrepreneurial Capabilities, Learning, and Adaptation under Rapid Technological Change:** Accelerated technological change compresses decision horizons and intensifies uncertainty, increasing the importance of entrepreneurial capabilities related to learning, experimentation, and adaptation. Recent work reframes dynamic capabilities in AI-rich contexts as increasingly distributed across cyber or human–machine systems, where entrepreneurs act as orchestrators of intelligent tools instead of acting as sole decision-makers (Rai et al., 2019; Fossen et al., 2024). This promotes complementarities across different sets of skills. Empirical studies show that AI adoption can enhance efficiency, flexibility, and scalability, but only when accompanied by complementary investments in skills, organisational learning, and governance (Kraus et al., 2022; Szukits and Móricz, 2024). Technological change is also cumulative and recombinatorial, with new ventures emerging through the recombination of digital platforms, data resources, and algorithmic capabilities. This reinforces the need for both continuous learning and entrepreneurial resilience, particularly as entrepreneurs navigate shifting technological standards, regulatory uncertainty, and competitive dynamics in digitally mediated markets (Audretsch et al., 2024; Siddiqui et al., 2024).
- **Systemic Technological Change, Values, and Wellbeing:** Recent research increasingly highlights that technological change has profound implications for values and wellbeing, extending beyond firm performance to individual, organisational, and societal outcomes. While AI-driven entrepreneurship can enhance creativity, autonomy, and opportunity generation, it may also intensify stress, ethical tension, and perceptions of obsolescence, particularly in contexts characterised by rapid automation and uneven access to digital capabilities (Lindebaum et al., 2020; Fossen et al., 2024). At a systemic level, AI-enabled technological change interacts with labour markets, regulation, and social institutions, shaping patterns of inclusion, inequality, and regional development (Obschonka et al., 2024; Roundy and Asllani, 2024). A values-driven approach to entrepreneurship therefore requires critical reflection on how technological trajectories are governed, how responsibilities are distributed across human–AI systems, and how innovation can be aligned with long-term societal wellbeing and human endeavour.

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Theme 3 - Individual and Organisational Well-being and Entrepreneurial Resilience

How does AI affect individual and/or social well-being? At its core, we could consider two directions of travel. The first direction takes us to addressing AI as an enabler of improved human outcomes, such as mental health support (chatbots, early detection models), healthcare optimisation (diagnostics, personalised medicine), workplace well-being (burnout prediction, workload balancing), and social care (elderly support, assistive technologies). Increasingly, AI is also positioned as a critical tool for navigating climate-related stressors, from early warning systems for extreme weather to climate-adaptive business modelling, enabling individuals and organisations to anticipate and respond to environmental volatility (IPCC, 2022; Otto et al., 2020). AI-driven climate analytics can reduce uncertainty, support disaster preparedness, and strengthen adaptive capacity — key components of psychological and organisational resilience in a warming world.

The second direction of travel allows us to explore how AI impacts well-being or how it can be seen as a risk factor augmenting workplace stress in terms of job displacement anxiety, algorithmic management of people, digital fatigue and cognitive overload, bias, unfairness, and exclusion (affecting psychological safety), and surveillance engendering reduced autonomy and trust. Climate change amplifies these risks: ecological disruptions intensify economic precarity, heighten competition for resources, and exacerbate social fragmentation, making AI-driven inequalities more visible and more consequential (Adger et al., 2013; Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018). In climate-stressed contexts, algorithmic decisions about insurance, mobility, energy access, or resource allocation can deepen feelings of vulnerability and loss of control.

Taken together, these two directions lead us to consider AI literacy, entrepreneurial resilience, psychological impact, identity, and climate adaptability as interconnected well-being dimensions at the individual and organisational levels.

- **AI Literacy, Climate Adaptability, and Entrepreneurial Resilience:** Liu, Hu, and Kong (2025) show that AI literacy enhances entrepreneurial resilience by reducing AI-related anxiety and enabling more confident engagement with digital

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Theme 3 - Individual and Organisational Well-being and Entrepreneurial Resilience (cont.)

tools. This aligns with broader research on digital resilience (Bennett et al., 2020), which emphasises adaptability, continuous learning, and emotional regulation. In a climate-unstable world, these capabilities become even more critical. Entrepreneurs increasingly face compound uncertainty — technological, ecological, and socio-political. Climate-related disruptions such as supply-chain instability, extreme weather, and resource scarcity require rapid adaptation and data-driven decision-making (Siders, 2019; Folke et al., 2021). AI literacy enables entrepreneurs to leverage climate-intelligence systems, sustainability analytics, and predictive modelling to build climate-resilient business models. Thus, AI literacy becomes a foundation for climate-aware entrepreneurial resilience, supporting decision-making under environmental volatility.

- **Psychological Impact of AI Integration in a Climate-Stressed Society:** AI can both enhance and undermine well-being. The positive impact manifests in terms of reduced cognitive load (Shrestha, Ben-Menahem & von Krogh, 2019), enhanced creativity through human–AI collaboration (Amabile & Pratt, 2016), and increased autonomy and flexibility. AI-enabled climate forecasting and adaptive planning tools can also reduce psychological stress by offering clarity in the face of ecological uncertainty. On the other hand, the downsides of AI integration include fear of technological displacement (Frey & Osborne, 2017), overreliance on algorithms (Burrell, 2016), and ethical stress from navigating AI's societal implications. Climate change intensifies these psychological pressures: entrepreneurs and workers may experience eco-anxiety, resource insecurity, and heightened emotional strain as climate disruptions reshape markets and livelihoods (Clayton, 2020; Hickman et al., 2021). When AI systems mediate access to climate-critical resources — energy, mobility, insurance — ethical stress and perceived unfairness can escalate, especially in communities already vulnerable to climate impacts (Thomas et al., 2019).
- **Work, Identity, Meaning, and Climate-Responsive Entrepreneurship:** As AI takes over routine tasks, entrepreneurs may shift toward creative, relational, and strategic work. However, the erosion of human agency may diminish the sense of ownership and accomplishment traditionally associated with entrepreneurship.

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Theme 3 - Individual and Organisational Well-being and Entrepreneurial Resilience (cont.)

This tension is explored by Susskind (2020), who argues that AI may transform — not eliminate — meaningful work. Climate change adds a further layer to this identity shift. Entrepreneurs increasingly define themselves not only by innovation but by sustainability, stewardship, and climate responsibility. The meaning of work becomes tied to contributing to ecological resilience, supporting community adaptation, and building regenerative business models (Bansal & Song, 2017; George et al., 2016). Yet this also creates pressure: the moral weight of climate responsibility can heighten stress, especially when resources are limited or institutional support is fragmented. Crucially, the well-being of the entrepreneur in an innovative milieu is dependent on the well-being of the partners and employees in the firm started by the entrepreneur (Gopinath and Mitra, 2017). Climate disruptions—heat stress, displacement, supply chain instability—affect employees unevenly, making organisational well-being inseparable from climate resilience strategies (Kjellstrom et al., 2018).

Theme 4 - Gendering Entrepreneurship in the Age of AI - Opportunities, Inclusion, and Support

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly embedded in entrepreneurial activities, it is important to ask not only what AI enables, but also for whom, under what conditions, and at what cost. While AI is often presented as a democratising force that lowers barriers to entry, enhances efficiency, and expands access to entrepreneurial opportunities (e.g., Uriarte et al., 2026), research suggests that its benefits are unevenly distributed across different social groups (e.g., Sun et al., 2024). The emerging literature on women entrepreneurship and AI indicates that AI may create new possibilities for flexibility, customer engagement, market reach, and sustainability, while also reproducing longstanding inequalities linked to skills, trust, finance, institutional support, and cultural norms (Altinay et al., 2026; Sadraei & Dal Mas, 2026).

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Theme 4 - Gendering Entrepreneurship in the Age of AI - Opportunities, Inclusion, and Support (cont.)

Two factors can be taken into consideration to understand how generative AI is altering entrepreneurial possibilities for women, while also drawing attention to the institutional infrastructures needed to convert technological change into genuinely inclusive entrepreneurial development.

- **Women's Entrepreneurship and the Shift Towards AI-Enabled Capability:** As entrepreneurship becomes increasingly digital, women may continue to face disadvantages in digital access and proficiency (Irene et al., 2025). Generative AI, however, may also reshape what counts as entrepreneurial competence (Li et al., 2025). Recent research suggests that the effective use of AI depends not only on technical know-how, but also on AI literacy, prompt quality, domain knowledge, and the ability to articulate goals, constraints, and context clearly (Knoth et al., 2024; Li et al., 2025). In this sense, AI may help reduce some traditional technical barriers and create new opportunities for women entrepreneurs, particularly in non-technical sectors where contextual understanding, customers' insight, and opportunity framing are central to venture development (Irene et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025).
- **Building Inclusive and Supportive Ecosystem for Women Entrepreneurs:** The rise of AI strengthens the case for more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems. Universities, incubators, NGOs, policymakers, and business support organisations have an important role in ensuring that women entrepreneurs are not left behind in AI-led transitions. The literature increasingly points to the importance of gender-sensitive policy frameworks, targeted training, affordable access to tools, mentoring, and trustworthy governance arrangements that connect innovation to social and economic wellbeing (Altinay et al., 2026; Sadraei & Dal Mas, 2026). A gendered lens therefore, does not sit outside the AI entrepreneurship debate; it is central to understanding how access, risk, resilience, and entrepreneurial value creation are being reshaped in the age of AI.

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Theme 5 - Entrepreneurial Ethics and Values in the Age of AI

As AI becomes integral to entrepreneurial ecosystems, questions of values and ethics move to the forefront. Entrepreneurs must navigate tensions between efficiency and equity, innovation and responsibility, automation, and human dignity. We could highlight three critical issues that permeate discussions on these tensions.

- **Ethical Decision-Making and Responsible Innovation:** Algorithmic bias, data privacy, transparency, and accountability are standard concerns in the application and use of AI. These concerns are echoed in foundational work by Floridi et al. (2018), who outline principles for ethical AI, and by Mittelstadt et al. (2016), who map the ethical risks of algorithmic decision-making. Von Schomberg's (2013) framework of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is often applied to AI entrepreneurship, emphasising anticipation, reflexivity, inclusion, and responsiveness.
- **Human-Centric Values:** Human-centric design is essential as AI mediates interactions between businesses and users. This aligns with the OECD's (2019) AI Principles, which emphasise fairness, transparency, and human oversight. Entrepreneurs who embed values such as sustainability, inclusivity, and wellbeing into AI-driven ventures are better positioned to build trust and legitimacy—an argument supported by George et al. (2021), who call for entrepreneurship research to address grand societal challenges.
- **The Moral Agency of Entrepreneurs:** AI challenges traditional notions of entrepreneurial agency. Entrepreneurs are expected to function as curators and overseers of intelligent systems. This resonates with Martin's (2019) work, which argues that algorithmic decision-making redistributes moral responsibility across human–machine systems, raising questions about accountability and agency.

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Theme 6 - Societal Wellbeing and the Broader Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in an Era of Unprecedented Uncertainty

In the context of the wider, entrepreneurial ecosystem, job creation/displacement, inequality, social capital development/erosion, and rapid technological change present more than binary choices. Systemic, social, and environmental forces provide the broader context within which individual and organisational experiences of AI and entrepreneurship unfold.In times of acute disruption, marked by war, geopolitical instability, and fractured institutions, these forces intensify, constraining finance, destabilising ecosystems, and demanding resilience in the face of extreme uncertainty. The consequences extend well beyond the firm: they resonate with community well-being, social cohesion, shared norms and practices, raising fundamental questions about equity, solidarity, sustainability, and the kind of future that entrepreneurial action is building.

- **Job Creation and Displacement:** Frey and Osborne (2017) estimate that 47% of jobs are at risk of automation, though subsequent research (Arntz, Gregory & Zierahn, 2016) suggests lower displacement when task-level analysis is used. AI-driven entrepreneurship can create new industries, but entrepreneurs must navigate the ethical implications of automation.
- **Inequality and Access:** AI can widen inequalities if access to data, skills, and capital is uneven or managed unsystematically. Eubanks (2018) shows how automated systems can reinforce structural inequalities, while Aghion et al. (2019) argue that innovation-driven growth can exacerbate inequality without inclusive policies.
- **Community and Social Capital:** Digital platforms can strengthen networks but may also erode traditional community bonds. Nambisan, Siegel and Kenney (2018) highlight how digital ecosystems reshape collaboration, governance, and value creation.
- **Entrepreneurial Resilience during Unprecedented Times:** In periods of geopolitical instability, AI-driven entrepreneurship is shaped not only by opportunity, but also by disrupted finance, fragmented supply chains, digital decoupling, cyber risk, and new forms of techno-nationalism. Research on conflict and post-conflict entrepreneurship shows that entrepreneurial activity can persist

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Theme 6 - Societal Wellbeing and the Broader Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in an Era of Unprecedented Uncertainty (cont.)

under extreme adversity, but it becomes more dependent on local ecosystem coordination, institutional support, and resilience-oriented rebuilding (Belitski et al., 2024; Moritz et al., 2024). Emerging work suggests that geopolitical tensions can constrain digital transformation and international scaling by limiting access to critical technologies, markets, and cross-border learning opportunities (Bretas & Tippmann, 2025; Fan et al., 2025). In this context, AI may help entrepreneurs adapt through faster information processing, resource reallocation, and crisis response, yet its value may remain uneven across different groups (Kraemer-Eis et al., 2024).

Looking Ahead: Toward a Values-Driven, Wellbeing-Oriented Entrepreneurial Future

To harness AI's potential while safeguarding wellbeing, entrepreneurs and policymakers should aim to adopt a comprehensive approach that integrates technology, ethics, and human flourishing in the wider contexts of economic, organisational, and social development. Key issues include ethical frameworks, AI literacy, augmentation, inclusion, and well-being cultures. We welcome creative adumbration and exploration to help generate new, entrepreneurial, and innovative agendas for research, learning, economic, organisational, and social development at the 22nd IEF Conference.

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