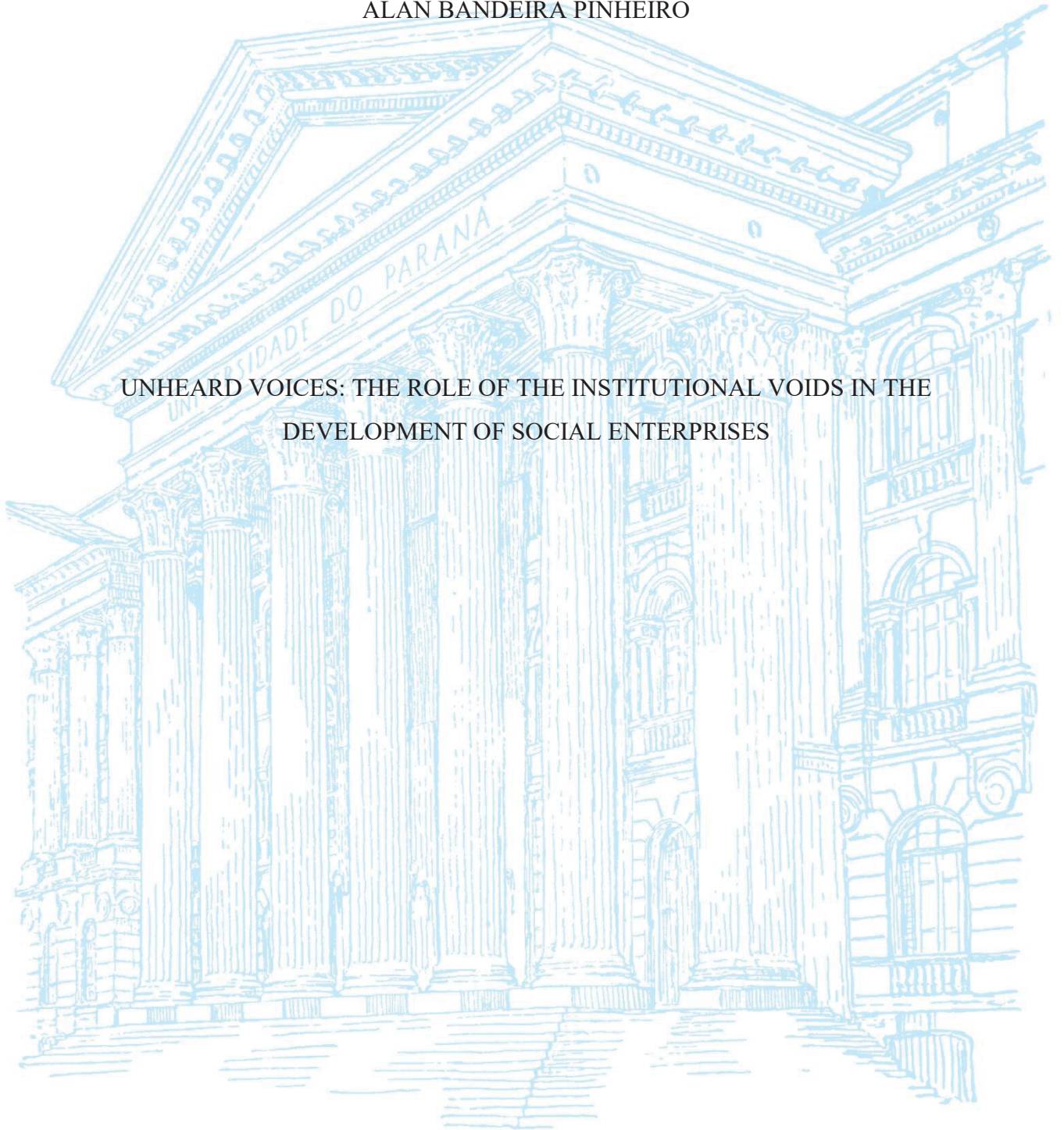


UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ

ALAN BANDEIRA PINHEIRO

UNHEARD VOICES: THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL VOIDS IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES



CURITIBA

2026

ALAN BANDEIRA PINHEIRO

UNHEARD VOICES: THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL VOIDS IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Tese apresentada ao curso de Doutorado em Administração, do Programa de Pós-graduação em Administração, do Setor de Ciências Sociais, da Universidade Federal do Paraná, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Doutor em Administração.

Orientadora: Profa. Dra. Andréa Paula Segatto.

CURITIBA

2026

DADOS INTERNACIONAIS DE CATALOGAÇÃO NA PUBLICAÇÃO (CIP)
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ
SISTEMA DE BIBLIOTECAS – BIBLIOTECA DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS APLICADAS

Pinheiro, Alan Bandeira

Unheard voices: the role of the institutional voids in the development of social enterprises / Alan Bandeira Pinheiro.- 2026.

1 recurso on-line: PDF.

Tese (Doutorado) - Universidade Federal do Paraná, Setor de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração.

Orientadora: Andréa Paula Segatto.

1. Administração. 2. Empreendedorismo social. 3. Brasil. I. Segatto, Andréa Paula. II. Universidade Federal do Paraná. Setor de Ciências Sociais Aplicadas. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração. III. Título.

TERMO DE APROVAÇÃO

Os membros da Banca Examinadora designada pelo Colegiado do Programa de Pós-Graduação ADMINISTRAÇÃO da Universidade Federal do Paraná foram convocados para realizar a arguição da tese de Doutorado de **ALAN BANDEIRA PINHEIRO**, intitulada: **UNHEARD VOICES: THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL VOIDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES**, sob orientação da Profa. Dra. ANDRÉA PAULA SEGATTO, que após terem inquirido o aluno e realizada a avaliação do trabalho, são de parecer pela sua APROVAÇÃO no rito de defesa.

A outorga do título de doutor está sujeita à homologação pelo colegiado, ao atendimento de todas as indicações e correções solicitadas pela banca e ao pleno atendimento das demandas regimentais do Programa de Pós-Graduação.

Curitiba, 06 de Fevereiro de 2026.

Assinatura Eletrônica
19/02/2026 12:31:19.0
ANDRÉA PAULA SEGATTO
Presidente da Banca Examinadora

Assinatura Eletrônica
19/02/2026 14:36:39.0
JOSÉ CARLOS LÁZARO DA SILVA FILHO
Avaliador Externo (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO CEARÁ)

Assinatura Eletrônica
20/02/2026 10:10:13.0
ANA COLOVIC
Avaliador Externo (NEOMA BUSINESS SCHOOL)

Assinatura Eletrônica
19/02/2026 11:36:42.0
RODRIGO LUIZ MORAIS DA SILVA
Avaliador Interno (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ)

Peace without a voice isn't peace, it's fear.
(O Rappa - Brazilian rock/reggae band, 1999)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I acknowledge myself for the sustained effort and perseverance over the past years. This thesis is a formality; academic formation extends far beyond a document and is evidenced by a trajectory marked by (so far) 70 publications, 12 awards, over 600 citations on Google Scholar, and many invitations to collaborate with researchers from different countries around the world, reflecting a continuous and committed engagement with knowledge.

I am grateful to Professor Andrea Paula Segatto for her supervision, guidance, and support throughout this research. I thank the examination committee for the valuable contributions: Professor Rodrigo Silva, Professor Carlos Lázaro, and Professor Ana Colovic, the latter for enabling me to see further.

I thank my parents, Solange and Elizeu, for always emphasizing the transformative role of education. I also thank my friends Gabriel, Gabriele, Joina, Lucas, Murilo, Nágela, Pietra and Rodrigo, and all those who, in different ways, have taught me along the way.

Ultimately, research is also an act of giving voice to those who are not always heard, and I am deeply grateful to each interviewee for allowing me to access their memories and for sharing their experiences and insights about the social enterprises studied.

RESUMO

Este estudo investiga como o ambiente institucional molda o desenvolvimento de empresas sociais no Brasil. Embora a literatura reconheça que os vazios institucionais restringem a atividade empreendedora em mercados emergentes, pouco se sabe sobre como as empresas sociais vivenciam, navegam e transformam esses vazios. Com base em oito estudos de caso múltiplos em São Paulo e Fortaleza, os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas. A análise foi guiada por três proposições teóricas, conectando padrões empíricos à literatura sobre vazios formais e informais e à pesquisa sobre inovação social. Os resultados mostram que os vazios formais (lacunas regulatórias, fricções de financiamento, falhas de infraestrutura, falta de marcos legais adequados) restringem o acesso ao mercado, aumentam os custos de transação e transferem funções públicas para organizações da sociedade civil. Os vazios informais (estigma territorial, racismo, homofobia, desconfiança e baixo nível de alfabetização ambiental) interferem na legitimidade social e reduzem a demanda. Ao mesmo tempo, as empresas sociais mitigam ambas as formas de vazios gerando empregos, construindo redes, possibilitando o consumo sustentável, produzindo bens públicos e transformando narrativas culturais que reproduzem a exclusão. O estudo contribui para o avanço da teoria ao reformular os vazios institucionais não apenas como restrições, mas também como campos de atuação institucional. Para gestores de empresas sociais, as descobertas indicam a importância de desenvolver múltiplas estratégias de legitimação que combinem resultados sociais tangíveis, transparência organizacional e engajamento comunitário. Para governos, os achados reforçam a necessidade de reconhecer e regulamentar legalmente as empresas sociais como uma categoria específica de organização híbrida, distinta tanto do terceiro setor quanto das empresas convencionais. Para formuladores de políticas e atores do ecossistema de impacto, os resultados sugerem a importância de fortalecer a representação política e institucional das empresas sociais.

Palavras-chave: Empreendedorismo social. Empresas sociais. Vazios Institucionais. Economia emergente. Brasil.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how the institutional environment shapes the development of social enterprises in Brazil. While the literature recognizes that institutional voids constrain entrepreneurial activity in emerging markets, little is known about how social enterprises specifically experience, navigate and transform these voids. Based on eight multiple case studies in São Paulo and Fortaleza, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The analysis was guided by three theoretical propositions, connecting empirical patterns to the formal and informal voids literature, and to research on social innovation. The findings show that formal voids (regulation gaps, financing frictions, infrastructure failures, lack of adapted legal frameworks) restrict market access, raise transaction costs and displace public functions to civil society organizations. Informal voids (territorial stigma, racism, homophobia, distrust and low environmental literacy) undermine social legitimacy and reduce demand. At the same time, social enterprises mitigate both forms of voids by generating employment, building networks, enabling sustainable consumption, producing public goods and shifting cultural narratives that reproduce exclusion. The study advances theory by reframing institutional voids not only as constraints but also as fields of institutional agency from below. For social enterprise managers, the findings indicate the importance of developing multiple legitimation strategies that combine tangible social outcomes, organizational transparency, and community engagement. For governments, the evidence reinforces the need to legally recognize and regulate social enterprises as a specific category of hybrid organization, distinct from both the third sector and conventional businesses. For policymakers and actors in the impact ecosystem, the results suggest the importance of strengthening the political and institutional representation of social enterprises.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship. Social enterprises. Institutional gaps. Emerging economy. Brazil.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Steps for revising literature	34
Figure 2. VOSviewer output with the thematic network of co-occurring keywords.....	41
Figure 3. Conceptual framework	49
Figure 4. Theoretical framework	93

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Examples of institutional voids found in the literature.....	32
Table 2. Previous studies	35
Table 3. Number of articles published by journal.....	40
Table 4. Selected cases	52
Table 5. Duration of interviews by case and participant type.....	54
Table 6. Anchorage table	59
Table 7. Summary of selected cases	64
Table 8. Summary of identified motivators and barriers	72

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND BBREVIATIONS

ABS list	Academic Journal Guide
ANPROTEC	Brazilian Association Of Science Parks And Business Incubators
B-Corp	Benefit Corporation
BVI	Blind And Visually Impaired
C3	Community Contribution Company
CIC	Community Interest Company
CD	Conceptual Definition
ENIMPACTO	National Strategy For Investments And Impact Businesses
GIIRS	Global Impact Investing Rating System
HDI	Human Development Index
ICE	Instituto De Cidadania Empresarial
IRIS	Impact Reporting And Investment Standards
ISs	Institutional Supports
IT	Institutional Theory
IVs	Institutional Voids
L3C	Low-Profit Limited Liability Company
NSI	National Systems Of Innovation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OD	Operational Definition
RCTs	Randomized Control Trials
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	Social Enterprises
SROI	Social Return On Investment
WoS	Web Of Science
UFPR	Federal University Of Paraná

SUMMARY

1	INTRODUCTION	13
1.1	Research Question	15
1.2	Research Aim	15
1.2.1	<i>Specific objectives</i>	16
1.3	Justification For Conducting This Research	16
1.3.1	<i>Theoretical justification</i>	16
1.3.2	<i>Practical justification</i>	18
1.4	Thesis Structure	19
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	20
2.1	Social Enterprises: Concepts And Characteristics	20
2.1.1	<i>Definitions of social enterprise</i>	20
2.1.2	<i>Social enterprise models</i>	22
2.1.3	<i>Legal structure and governance</i>	23
2.1.4	<i>Sources of funding</i>	24
2.1.5	<i>Social impact and indicators</i>	25
2.2	Institutional Perspective: Theory And Voids	27
2.2.1	<i>Institutional voids</i>	29
2.3	Institutional Voids and Social Enterprises	33
2.3.1	<i>Evidences from the previous literature</i>	33
2.3.2	<i>Exploring institutional context and social enterprises in Brazil</i>	42
2.4	Research Propositions	46
3	METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES	50
3.1	Research Approach	50
3.2	Selection Of Case Studies	51
3.3	Data Collection	53
3.4	Data Analysis	55
3.4.1	<i>Analysis categories</i>	56
3.5	Rigor In Qualitative Research	57
3.6	Anchorage Table	58
4	DATA ANALYSIS	60
4.1	Presentation Of The Cases Analysed	60
4.1.1	<i>Case study A: Where food meets social change</i>	60

4.1.2	<i>Case study B: Weaving empowerment from waste</i>	60
4.1.3	<i>Case study C: A green bridge for conscious consumers</i>	61
4.1.4	<i>Case study D: Turning trash into opportunity</i>	61
4.1.5	<i>Case study E: Opening doors where they were closed</i>	62
4.1.6	<i>Case study F: Planting food, growing community</i>	62
4.1.7	<i>Case study G: From waste to watts</i>	63
4.1.8	<i>Case study H: Crafting style from scraps</i>	63
4.1.9	<i>Case overview</i>	64
4.2	Mission, Motivators And Barriers	65
4.2.1	<i>Case study FO1L: Where food meets social change</i>	65
4.2.2	<i>Case study FO2L: Weaving empowerment from waste</i>	66
4.2.3	<i>Case study FO3H: A green bridge for conscious consumers</i>	66
4.2.4	<i>Case study FO4H: Turning trash into opportunity</i>	67
4.2.5	<i>Case study SP1L: Opening doors where they were closed</i>	68
4.2.6	<i>Case study SP2M: Planting food, growing community</i>	69
4.2.7	<i>Case study SP3H: From waste to watts</i>	70
4.2.8	<i>Case study SP4H: Crafting style from scraps</i>	71
4.3	How Do Formal Institutional Voids Act In The Development Of Social Enterprises?	73
4.4	How Do Informal Institutional Voids Act In The Development Of Social Enterprises?	77
4.5	How Do Social Enterprises Mitigate Institutional Formal And Informal Voids?	79
4.5.1	<i>Mitigating formal institutional voids</i>	79
4.5.2	<i>Mitigating informal institutional voids</i>	83
5	DISCUSSION AND THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS	86
5.1	Discussion Of Research Prepositions	86
5.2	A New Theoretical Model	93
5.3	Theoretical Implications	95
5.4	Practical Implications	96
6	CONCLUSIONS	98
6.1	Purpose Of The Research	98
6.2	Limitations Of This Study	101
6.3	Avenues for Future Studies	101

REFERENCES	103
APPENDIX 1 - INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW	117
APPENDIX 2 – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE APPLIED TO MANAGERS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES	120

1 INTRODUCTION

There is a consensus in the literature that social enterprises (SE) contribute to economic and social well-being (Mair; Rathert, 2025), as they play an important role in economic development and poverty reduction by creating new jobs, increasing the participation of needy populations in the market and promoting the circulation of financial capital among all those involved in the production chain (Rosca; Agarwal; Brem, 2020). These organizations represent an important pillar in society, complementing the role of the State and the private sector (Xiao, 2025). This dynamic has been driven by governmental inefficiencies in addressing social concerns and by the growing recognition that businesses can also contribute to solving societal problems (Muldoon et al., 2025).

Social enterprises differ from traditional businesses (Mathias; Souza; Ribeiro, 2024) since this type of organization creates social value as a primary goal (Gallo; Melé, 2024). Then, the creation of social impact is also one of the objectives of this type of organization and the generation of economic value is often seen as a means of providing social value in a sustainable way to meet the demands of an underprivileged part of society (Mair; Martí; Ventresca, 2012). In this perspective, there is a growing academic, managerial and governmental interest in developing social impact businesses (Nwauche; Claeys, 2024), since they complement governmental efforts to promote social inclusion and sustainable development (Muldoon et al., 2025).

By operating at the frontier of traditional notions of organization, social enterprises maximize the use of resources, skills and networking (Muñoz; Kimmitt, 2019). In addition, in emerging contexts, these businesses promote innovation that benefits the underprivileged, that is, those who are denied access to training and opportunities (Fu; Yan, 2024). Despite the positive impact of social enterprises on society, research in this field remains limited, as the literature is still in a developmental stage, leaving room for further theoretical and empirical exploration (Hota, 2023).

Facing this challenge, previous research (Kruse; Wach; Wegge, 2021; Lladós-Masllorens; Ruiz-Dotras, 2022; Wanyoike; Maseno, 2021; Yu; Ye; Ma, 2021) has attempted to understand how entrepreneurs' individual characteristics, such as gender and human, financial and social capital, promote the creation and the development of new social enterprises. Due to the performance of social enterprises, factors external to this type of organization play a significant role in shaping their strategies (Hota, 2023). However, the role of the institutional environment in the development of social enterprises is still unclear (Lashitew; Van Tulder;

Muche, 2022b) since most research on social enterprises focuses on the individual characteristics of entrepreneurs without considering the institutional environment (Nwauche; Claeys, 2024)

According to João-Roland and Granados (2020), social enterprises represent a dynamic process that begins with an entrepreneur or a small group of individuals (organizational level) who possess the capacity to influence and transform the broader social system (institutional level), potentially leading to the development of new laws, norms, and structures. Within this institutional context, the concept of institutional voids, the absence or weakness of formal and informal mechanisms that facilitate social and economic transactions, becomes particularly relevant (Lee et al., 2022).

Most studies examining the institutional environment of social enterprises tend to emphasize formal institutions, such as government regulations, policy frameworks, and support mechanisms, while informal institutions, including cultural values, social norms, and trust, remain comparatively underexplored (Lee et al., 2022). Yet, both types of institutions are crucial in shaping how social enterprises emerge and operate, especially in contexts characterized by weak governance or limited market infrastructure.

Despite the growing body of literature on institutional voids, which typically focuses on voids in formal institutions such as regulations, infrastructure, or market intermediaries, existing research on social enterprises has largely adopted a macro-level perspective (Torres; Augusto, 2020b), often comparing countries and treating them as homogeneous entities. This dominant approach overlooks the significant intra-country variation in institutional conditions, particularly in large and diverse countries such as Brazil, India, or South Africa, where disparities in governance capacity, infrastructure, and social capital generate uneven environments for social enterprise development (Bothello; Nason; Schnyder, 2019a; Fu; Yan, 2024). Consequently, the localized and context-specific ways in which social enterprises respond to and mitigate institutional voids, especially informal ones, remain underexplored.

Social enterprises navigate complex institutional environments, adapting to asymmetries such as differences in public service provision, market access, and community engagement across municipalities or districts (Hidalgo; Monticelli; Vargas Bortolaso, 2024). This perspective aligns with recent calls in institutional theory to move beyond monolithic, country-level conceptions of institutions and toward a more granular, place-based understanding of institutional dynamics (Bothello; Nason; Schnyder, 2019a). In this context, institutional voids, where formal or informal institutional arrangements are weak or absent, play a critical role in shaping how social enterprises emerge and operate (Brix-Asala; Seuring, 2020).

Although the institutional environment is widely recognized as influential in emerging economies, its precise effects on social enterprise development remain underexplored (Belayutham et al., 2019; Nwauche; Claeys, 2024). Understanding how institutional voids may hinder or be mitigated by social enterprises can provide insights for both theoretical development and public policy design. (Klarin; Suseno, 2023) emphasize the importance of investigating how macro-level institutional changes influence micro-level behaviors, and conversely, how social enterprises can act as institutional entrepreneurs, shaping and filling voids in their environments.

Individual-level factors, such as human capital, and the characteristics of the market environment also significantly influence social entrepreneurship (Spanuth; Urbano, 2024). While national institutions establish the formal “rules of the game,” the role of informal institutions, including social norms, trust, and cultural practices, remains insufficiently understood (Audretsch et al., 2023). Studying how social enterprises interact with and complement institutional voids represents a promising avenue for future research (Klarin; Suseno, 2023).

Brazil provides a particularly compelling context for examining these dynamics due to its complex institutional landscape, where formal regulatory frameworks coexist with informal arrangements (Santos et al., 2021). Despite national strategies aimed at fostering social enterprise development, the absence of a specific legal status for impact businesses continues to generate operational ambiguity and challenges (Siqueira; Bin; Stefanuto, 2021). This scenario highlights the need for nuanced investigations of how institutional actors (governments, funders, and intermediary organizations) influence the emergence and development of social enterprises. Exploring the Brazilian case can therefore advance both theoretical perspectives on social entrepreneurship and institutional dynamics and practical strategies to strengthen ecosystem support in emerging economies.

1.1 Research Question

Given the arguments presented, this research project adopts the following problem: How do institutional voids affect the development of social enterprises in the institutional environment in which they located?

1.2 Research Aim

This research, aimed at solving the problem addressed, has a general objective of understanding the role of institutional voids in the development of social enterprises.

1.2.1 Specific objectives

To achieve this general objective, the research has the following specific objectives:

- a) Select social enterprises by analyzing their mission, motivators, and barriers;
- b) Analyze how formal institutional voids influence the development of social enterprises;
- c) Analyze how informal institutional voids influence the development of social enterprises;
- d) Examine how social enterprises, through their positive impact, mitigate formal and informal institutional voids in the environment.

1.3 Justification For Conducting This Research

The theoretical and managerial contributions of this thesis will be presented in the following sequence.

1.3.1 Theoretical justification

Understanding how institutional arrangements, particularly institutional voids, influence the development of social enterprises is essential for advancing both theory and practice in the field of social entrepreneurship. These dynamics are especially relevant in emerging economies such as Brazil, where institutional conditions are heterogeneous and often marked by gaps in formal and informal structures. In this vein, this study responds to the call made by Olmedo, Van Twuijver, O'Shaughnessy (2023), who emphasize the need to analyze social enterprises through their relationships with external institutional factors that shape their performance.

Brazil is the seventh most socially unequal nation in the world, reflecting persistent challenges in access to education, sanitation, water, and food for a significant portion of the population (Hase Ueta et al., 2023). Given that the performance of social enterprises varies across countries, partly due to distinct socioeconomic and institutional conditions (Kerlin et al.,

2021), it is crucial to understand how these organizations contribute to reducing inequality in the Brazilian context.

The expansion of social enterprises represents a relatively new discourse that has drawn increasing attention from academia, policymakers, and practitioners (Song; Wang, 2024). Research that investigates how social enterprises respond organizationally to institutional complexity can yield valuable insights for public decision-makers and contribute to regional and local development strategies (Kerlin; Peng; Cui, 2021). Besides that, the majority of existing studies on entrepreneurship and social enterprise are situated in developed economies. Consequently, research in emerging contexts is essential to test the applicability of previous findings and to assess how institutional environments of differing maturity influence social enterprise performance (Rosca; Agarwal; Brem, 2020).

Emerging economies are characterized by turbulent and uncertain environments that pose additional challenges to social entrepreneurs (Wu; Cai; Song, 2023). Research in this field is relevant because entrepreneurs contribute to regional development by generating employment opportunities and expanding market participation, not only as consumers but also as producers and suppliers. Despite this importance, most studies on social enterprises have been conducted through the lens of Resource Dependence Theory, with a strong emphasis on countries such as China and India (Gupta et al., 2020; Nwauche; Claeys, 2024).

At the theoretical level, this research contributes to advancing Institutional Theory by deepening the understanding of how institutional voids, both formal and informal, shape organizational behavior in emerging economies. By analyzing social enterprises in Brazil, the study highlights how these organizations interact with, adapt to, and sometimes transform their institutional environments. This perspective extends institutional debates beyond traditional firm-level or developed-economy analyses, illustrating that institutional arrangements in emerging contexts are not merely constraints but also spaces for innovation, hybridization, and institutional entrepreneurship (Fu; Yan, 2024). In doing so, the study enriches theoretical discussions on how institutions function simultaneously as enabling and constraining forces, offering a more nuanced view of institutional dynamics within social entrepreneurship.

In this sense, the innovation of this research lies in its integrative and bidirectional analytical approach to institutional voids and social enterprises. Rather than treating institutional voids solely as external constraints, the study advances a conceptual perspective that positions them as dynamic elements that both shape and are shaped by organizational action. The proposed objectives are therefore essential because they operationalize this perspective: they allow for a systematic examination of how different types of voids influence

organizational trajectories while simultaneously investigating how social enterprises actively respond to, navigate, and potentially transform these institutional conditions. By structuring the inquiry across selection criteria, formal and informal dimensions, and impact mechanisms, the research moves beyond descriptive analyses and establishes an explanatory framework capable of capturing reciprocal effects. This design not only strengthens theoretical precision but also contributes methodological clarity to the field, offering a model for future studies seeking to analyze institutional complexity through multi-level, interaction-oriented research strategies.

1.3.2 Practical justification

On a practical level, the study will show which factors in the country's governance structure discourage the development of social enterprises. The findings of this study intend to present how differences in institutional development between Brazilian regions affect the development of social businesses. Based on the results, the research aims to suggest ways for decision-makers in emerging countries to act, in order to promote the development of social business ecosystems, filling existing institutional voids. Furthermore, this research responds to the call for research on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), more specifically, the study aligns with SDG 1 (poverty reduction), SDG 8 (decent work and creation of opportunities for economic growth) and SDG 10 (reduction of social inequalities).

Understanding the impacts of institutional voids on the creation and development of social enterprises is extremely relevant in practice, especially in countries like Brazil, where the lack of clear legal frameworks, specific public policies and adequate economic incentives creates an environment of uncertainty for social entrepreneurs (Siqueira; Bin; Stefanuto, 2021). In practice, these institutional voids hinder access to financial resources, legal recognition of organizations and the construction of appropriate governance models, directly affecting the sustainability and scalability of impact businesses. Investigating how these factors interfere in the daily lives of social enterprises allows us to identify concrete obstacles faced by entrepreneurs, pointing out ways to strengthen the impact ecosystem in the country (Bravim et al., 2025).

In addition, the study has the potential to provide support for the formulation of more effective public policies, based on empirical evidence on the real needs and challenges faced by social enterprises in fragile institutional contexts. Governments, support organizations and impact investors can benefit from the results of the research by adjusting their operating strategies, fostering environments that are more conducive to the flourishing of initiatives with

high social value. By highlighting existing institutional voids and their practical consequences, the study contributes to the construction of solutions more aligned with the reality of social entrepreneurship in emerging and unequal countries like Brazil.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organized into six main sections. The Introduction presents the context and relevance of social enterprises, outlines the research gap in current literature, and defines the general and specific objectives of the study, along with its justification and structural organization. The Literature Review examines key theoretical foundations, including Institutional Theory and institutional voids, defines the main characteristics of social enterprises, and reviews existing research on how these enterprises interact with institutional deficiencies. This review informs the development of three research propositions that guide the empirical investigation. The Methods section describes the qualitative research design, data collection and analysis procedures, and the validity and reliability strategies employed to ensure methodological rigor.

In the Results section, the findings reveal that social enterprises actively respond to institutional voids by creating hybrid governance models, fostering local partnerships, and adapting their operations to compensate for missing or weak institutions. These enterprises also demonstrate institutional innovation by filling gaps in public service provision and promoting social inclusion. The Discussion connects these findings to Institutional Theory, showing how social enterprises act as institutional entrepreneurs in contexts of voids—either by adapting to existing constraints or by reshaping local institutional environments. The discussion also contrasts the empirical results with the literature, highlighting both alignment and novel contributions. Finally, the Conclusion synthesizes the study's contributions to theory and practice, emphasizing how social enterprises serve not only as gap-fillers but as active agents of institutional development. It also outlines the study's limitations and suggests directions for future research, particularly on the role of social enterprises in policy and system-level change in emerging market contexts.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and empirical foundations relevant to this study. Section 2.1 explores the existing body of knowledge on social enterprises, focusing on their hybrid nature, mission-driven orientation, and the challenges they face in balancing social and economic goals. Section 2.2 introduces Institutional Theory as a foundational lens, highlighting how actions and behavior of organizations is shaped by formal and informal institutional pressures. Building on this, Section 2.3 delves into the concept of institutional voids—contexts where market-supporting institutions are weak or absent—and examines how social enterprises respond to and are shaped by these gaps. The review draws on peer-reviewed literature from Scopus and Web of Science to ensure a rigorous and up-to-date synthesis of current academic insights.

2.1 Social Enterprises: Concepts And Characteristics

Social enterprises have established themselves as an innovative alternative to address social and environmental challenges that traditional business models and public intervention are not always able to address effectively (Doherty; Haugh; Lyon, 2014). Their importance is growing in a global scenario marked by inequalities, environmental crises and changes in labor and consumer relations. In the context of this research, it is essential to understand the specificities of social enterprises, their conceptual origins and structural characteristics, since they constitute a strategic basis for the development of sustainable and inclusive solutions.

2.1.1 *Definitions of social enterprise*

The definition of social enterprise is still the subject of academic and practical debate, due to its hybrid and multifaceted nature. While non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations address societal challenges such as poverty, justice and social change, gender and racial inequalities, and climate change-related issues, social enterprises combine the economic role of business with these global challenges (Spieth et al., 2019). In this vein, social enterprises are considered from the perspective of various disciplines, such as economics, management, sociology and psychology (Phan Tan, 2021). In these different fields, different definitions and methods are used to explain social phenomena related to social enterprises. Some terms that the

literature uses as synonyms are social enterprises, social businesses, impact businesses, and social impact businesses.

According to Mair and Martí (2006), social enterprises involve an innovative approach to solving social problems. This type of business combines entrepreneurship with social issues to bring innovative solutions for social development (Peredo; Mclean, 2006). Social enterprises therefore have two tasks: ensuring financial sustainability and addressing social issues (Saebi; Foss; Linder, 2019). Profits generated by social enterprises are used to compensate owners, create social value, and/or fulfil social needs (Littlewood; Khan, 2018).

According to Bacq and Janssen (2011), social enterprises are formed by individuals who identify and explore opportunities to create social value through commercial activities, using available resources. Social enterprises are established by social entrepreneurs and are vehicles to meet social and environmental needs (Littlewood; Khan, 2018). Di Domenico, Haugh and Tracey (2010) add that these companies share the pursuit of revenue generation with private sector companies, as well as the scope of social needs of non-profit organizations.

Social businesses are understood as self-sustaining enterprises that generate revenue through the sale of goods or services, aiming primarily to address social problems and improve the lives of those in poverty (Yunus; Moingeon; Lehmann-Ortega, 2010). Unlike traditional businesses, their focus is not on maximizing profits for shareholders, but rather on maximizing social impact. Any financial surplus is reinvested into the business itself, ensuring its continuity and expansion. This model challenges the conventional dichotomy between for-profit and non-profit organizations by combining entrepreneurial strategies with a strong social mission (Savarese; Huybrechts; Hudon, 2021).

These companies use and combine resources to seek opportunities to catalyze social change and meet social needs (Mair; Martí, 2006). Littlewood and Khan (2018) summarize the main characteristics observed in social enterprises. For example, these companies generate income through commercial activity, can promote stakeholder participation in governance, can have a limited distribution of profits, usually innovate when trying to solve social problems, and they value social and ethical objectives above economic objectives.

Despite this, social enterprises are more market-oriented than non-profit organizations and have the ability to be financially self-sustaining (Di Domenico; Haugh; Tracey, 2010). These businesses seek to create social value through the sale of products and/or services, thus achieving financial sustainability independent of the government and other donors (Di Domenico; Haugh; Tracey, 2010). According to Certo and Miller (2008), this social value

consists mainly of meeting the basic and lasting needs of members of society rather than focusing on personal or shareholder profit.

Therefore, social enterprises are distinct from conventional businesses in that their core purpose centers on a social mission, which is either their primary focus or holds equal weight to their profit-driven goals. Unlike traditional nonprofit organizations, social enterprises generate revenue through commercial operations rather than relying on philanthropic contributions or public funding. Rather than layering social or financial aims onto an existing structure, social enterprises are typically designed from the outset to integrate both social impact and financial sustainability as central and simultaneous objectives (Battilana, 2018).

2.1.2 Social enterprise models

The diversity of social enterprise models reflects the wide range of socioeconomic contexts in which they emerge. Among the main types are labor insertion social enterprises, which focus on employing individuals in vulnerable situations, such as former prisoners, people with disabilities, or at-risk youth. These enterprises combine productive activities with training programs and psychosocial support, aiming not only at economic output but also at social inclusion and personal empowerment. A well-known example is La Fageda, a dairy cooperative in Spain that employs people with intellectual disabilities, integrating them into meaningful work and offering therapeutic support within a competitive business environment (Gallo; Melé, 2024).

Another recurring model is that of social enterprises guided by fair trade principles, which promote more equitable economic relations between producers and consumers (Marconatto; Barin Cruz; Aguilar Delgado, 2020). Microfinance companies, such as Grameen Bank (Bangladesh) and Palmas Bank (Brazil), also constitute a relevant type of social enterprise, by offering access to credit and financial services to populations excluded from traditional banking systems (Therese Hackett, 2010).

In addition, there are models based on social technologies, where technical innovation is harnessed to serve social objectives, such as providing low-cost solutions for housing, sanitation, or renewable energy. Notable examples include Aravind Eye Care in India, which uses a high-efficiency surgical model to deliver affordable eye care to millions (Virmani; Lépineux, 2016), and Solar Sister, which empowers women in sub-Saharan Africa to distribute solar-powered lamps and clean energy technologies in off-grid communities (Heuër, 2017).

In all these cases, the common point is the commitment to generating social value in a structured and self-sustainable way.

2.1.3 Legal structure and governance

The lack of a universal legal framework for social enterprises is one of the most significant barriers to their consolidation as an autonomous and recognized organizational model. This lack of regulatory definition means that, in many countries, social enterprises adopt preexisting legal forms, such as associations, cooperatives, foundations or for-profit companies adapted to the social mission, which often generates legal uncertainty, difficulties in accessing financing, and limitations on participation in specific public policies (Galera; Borzaga, 2009).

On the other hand, some countries have already made progress in creating their own legal frameworks for social enterprises. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Community Interest Company (CIC) was created in 2005, a specific legal type for businesses with a social impact. CICs are companies that operate for profit, but with restrictions on the distribution of dividends and the obligation to reinvest a significant portion of their profits in their social mission. They are regulated by the Office of the Regulator of Community Interest Companies, which ensures transparency and public accountability (Nicholls, 2010).

In Italy, since the 1990s, there has been the *Impresa Sociale*, formalized by Law No. 155/2006 and revised in 2016, which allows entities with different legal natures (including commercial companies) to register as social enterprises, provided they meet requirements such as: having clear social objectives, adopting participatory governance, reinvesting profits and being subject to specific audits (Testi et al., 2017). Italian legislation has inspired other legislative initiatives in Europe.

In Canada, some provinces such as British Columbia and Nova Scotia have created the Community Contribution Company (C3), which functions as a hybrid between a corporation and a non-profit organization (Hayhoe; Valentine, 2013). In the United States, several jurisdictions have adopted legal forms such as the Benefit Corporation (B-Corp) and the Low-profit Limited Liability Company (L3C). Both allow businesses to combine profit objectives with explicit social purposes, with B-Corps being recognized for their rigorous governance and sustainability practices (Toson, 2018).

In contrast, Brazil still lacks a specific legal framework for social enterprises, which hampers their visibility, recognition, and institutional support (Siqueira; Bin; Stefanuto, 2021). This absence of a dedicated legal status makes it more difficult for social enterprises to access

public funding, engage in partnerships with government agencies, and attract impact-oriented investors. As a result, many operate under legal formats that do not fully reflect their dual social and economic missions, such as associations, cooperatives, or limited liability companies (Mathias; Souza; Ribeiro, 2024).

In addition to the legal form, governance is a central aspect in the characterization of social enterprises. Governance in social enterprises differs from that of conventional companies because it incorporates principles such as democratic participation, transparency in decisions and collective responsibility for the social impact generated (Pestoff; Hulgård, 2016). This model often provides for the various stakeholders (users, employees, social investors, community) to have a voice in the decision-making processes, whether through participatory councils, open assemblies or other institutional mechanisms (Ebrahim; Battilana; Mair, 2014).

Strengthening democratic governance is particularly valued in networks such as the EMES Network, which considers the participatory dimension to be one of the pillars for recognizing an organization as a social enterprise (Defourny; Nyssens, 2008). This characteristic is essential to ensure that the social purpose remains central, even in the face of market pressures or changes in the institutional environment (Pestoff; Hulgård, 2016).

2.1.4 Sources of funding

A distinctive characteristic of social enterprises is their quest for financial self-sustainability, through the generation of their own revenue, usually through the sale of products or services (Reichert et al., 2021). Unlike traditional NGOs, which depend mainly on donations and public subsidies, social enterprises seek to balance their accounts based on economic activity, maintaining their independence and scalability (Dahles et al., 2020).

However, hybrid financing is a common practice. Many social enterprises supplement their revenue with one-off donations, support from impact investment funds, or partnerships with governments and multilateral institutions (Dahles et al., 2020). The difficulty lies in maintaining the balance between market logic and social purpose, without compromising the organization's mission (Battilana, 2018).

The flow of financial resources into social enterprises is hindered by several key barriers: a) widespread skepticism toward social enterprises, often stemming from the blending of commercial activities with social service delivery, which can lead to mistrust or confusion about their true intentions, b) the absence of supportive legislative and institutional frameworks, along with a lack of tailored investment products, reliable intermediaries, and mechanisms to

reduce information asymmetry and effectively connect the supply of capital with investment demand and c) difficulties in measuring and evaluating social impact, due to the limited availability of standardized tools and metrics that can credibly assess outcomes and performance (Mendell; Barbosa, 2013).

In the Brazilian context, social enterprises face significant challenges in achieving financial sustainability, especially due to the lack of a legal framework that allows them differentiated access to public policies, credit lines or tax incentives (Mathias; Souza; Ribeiro, 2024). Even so, many of these organizations have sought innovative hybrid financing strategies, combining their own revenues, through the sale of products or services, with partnerships with foundations, international organizations and private companies through impact investments (Siqueira; Bin; Stefanuto, 2021).

A growing example is the use of private social investment funds, such as those promoted by business institutes (e.g.: Fundação Tide Setubal, Instituto Sabin, ICE – Instituto de Cidadania Empresarial), which support impact businesses with financial contributions and training. In addition, Brazil has seen the expansion of crowdfunding platforms aimed at socio-environmental ventures, as well as the use of community-based business models, which strengthen self-sustainability through the direct engagement of the benefited populations. Despite these promising initiatives, the expansion of the support ecosystem — including legal frameworks, specialized incubators and specific public policies — is considered essential to ensure the long-term viability of these organizations (Marconatto; Barin Cruz; Aguilar Delgado, 2020).

2.1.5 Social impact and indicators

Measuring social impact is one of the fundamental pillars of social enterprises, distinguishing them from traditional businesses and philanthropic organizations (Fernandes; Grochau; Ten Caten, 2023). Assessing the social, economic or environmental effects generated by their activities in a structured manner allows not only for accountability to stakeholders, but also for continuous improvement of actions, attraction of impact investors and strengthening of institutional credibility.

Social impact can be defined as significant and lasting changes caused by the actions of an organization in the lives of individuals, communities or the environment. These changes can be direct (e.g. access to drinking water) or indirect (e.g. strengthening of a community's social capital) (Siqueira; Bin; Stefanuto, 2021). The difficulty lies in measuring these transformations

objectively, since they often involve qualitative and subjective dimensions (Fernandes; Grochau; Ten Caten, 2023).

Several methodologies have been developed and adopted globally to face this challenge. Among the most consolidated models is Social Return on Investment (SROI), which seeks to translate social impact into monetary terms, comparing the value of the social benefits generated with the amount invested in the initiative. This approach, in addition to providing a clear numerical indicator, facilitates comparison between different projects and facilitates communication with funders (Pathak; Dattani, 2014).

Lazzarini et al. (2018) distinguish between two broad methodological approaches for assessing the social impact of enterprises, each offering specific advantages and limitations. The first involves the use of standardized frameworks, such as the Impact Reporting and Investment Standards (IRIS) and the Global Impact Investing Rating System (GIIRS). These tools aim to facilitate comparability across organizations by providing consistent indicators and benchmarks. Their strength lies in enabling scalability and standard performance tracking, particularly useful for investors and stakeholders operating across multiple sectors or regions. However, such tools may lack sensitivity to contextual nuances and the complexity of specific interventions.

The second approach is project-specific and rooted in causal inference, often employing methodologies like Randomized Control Trials (RCTs), quasi-experimental designs, or other evaluation techniques that involve treatment and control groups. This strategy allows for a more detailed understanding of how and why an intervention generates its outcomes, offering a higher degree of rigor in attributing observed changes to a specific enterprise's actions. Despite its analytical precision, this method is typically resource-intensive, time-consuming, and less scalable, making it more suitable for in-depth studies of individual programs rather than broader impact comparison across organizations (Lazzarini, 2018).

In addition, many social enterprises adopt annual impact reports, published voluntarily and accessible to the public, as a form of transparency and engagement with their various audiences. These reports generally include quantitative data (number of beneficiaries, jobs created, tons of recycled waste, etc.) and qualitative narratives (transformation stories, testimonials, case studies) (Siqueira; Bin; Stefanuto, 2021).

The growing demand for transparency and proof of results makes impact measurement a strategic competence for social enterprises. More than a technical obligation, it is a constitutive element of the identity and legitimacy of these organizations. By articulating economic results with measurable social transformation, social enterprises reinforce their

position as key players in the construction of a more inclusive and sustainable development model.

2.2 Institutional Perspective: Theory And Voids

Institutional Theory (IT) has its origins in political economy and economic sociology and emerges as a response to classical economics, which considered the rational use of resources and the efficiency of transactions without considering social processes (Granovetter, 1985). Given this, social structures can affect economic activity in different ways: social ties between actors, shared belief systems, power structures and unequal opportunities in society, among others (Dacin; Ventresca; Beal, 1999). With this, it is clear that the social aspects related to markets are also considered in this theory.

IT is derived from the seminal studies of DiMaggio e Powell (1983), Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Zucker (1987) and, until today, is considered one of the main theories applied to organizational studies. This theory tries to explain how organizations perceive and respond to social changes and institutional pressures (Bouilloud et al., 2020). Therefore, IT focuses on analyzing factors external to organizations and how these factors influence their behavior. In this way, organizations are seen as an open system, in which their characteristics are influenced by institutions (Xing et al., 2025).

There are three streams of IT, according to Hotho and Pedersen (2012). They are: 1) organizational institutionalism, 2) institutional economics and 3) comparative institutionalism. The first strand has its roots in sociology and institutions are seen as stable social structures, composed of regulatory, cultural-cognitive and normative elements, which provide social stability (Scott, 1995, 2008). Organizations that are part of the same organizational field tend to adopt isomorphic behaviors in order to gain legitimacy.

The second stream, that is, institutional economics, has its roots in the economy and here institutions define the rules of the game that govern social exchanges between people and organizations (North, 1991). North (1991) categorizes institutions into formal and informal, with the former determining the rules of economic activities, reducing uncertainties, risks, and transaction costs. Informal institutions act in the absence of formal institutions and can be characterized by norms of behavior, codes of conduct, beliefs, and conventions.

In turn, comparative institutionalism represents the different institutional configurations of countries, such as economic models, national business systems and levels of development (Hotho; Pedersen, 2012). This strand proposes that national institutions affect the behavior of

organizations and society (Jackson; Deeg, 2008). Thus, society would be a mirror of national institutions. Hall and Soskice (2001) suggest that one way to compare institutional systems is by differentiating countries into coordinated economies and liberal economies.

In this sense, it is observed that the concept of institutions is important for institutionalists and it permeates the three strands of Institutional Theory. Despite the existence of these aspects, sometimes these approaches dialogue (Kostova et al., 2020). By relating these concepts, it is clear that institutions are macroeconomic elements that shape the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders. Thus, institutional differences between countries can result in different organizational configurations.

Despite the differences in their configurations, organizations tend to resemble each other, resulting in a process called isomorphism. According to Hannan and Freeman (1977), isomorphism is a restriction process, in which an organization starts to imitate others that face the same set of environmental conditions. Organizations resemble each other not only to compete for resources and customers, but also to obtain legitimacy and support from the institutional environment. Later, DiMaggio and Powell (1983a) deepened this concept of isomorphism and divided it into three mechanisms: coercive, mimetic and normative.

Coercive isomorphism is the result of formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by national institutions and society (DiMaggio; Powell, 1983b). Thus, the legal regulatory system illustrates this type of isomorphism, and as the State extends its influence over organizations, they tend to become more homogeneous (Meyer; Rowan, 1977). On the other hand, the lack of State action can result in mimetic isomorphism.

Mimetic isomorphism occurs when, in an environment of high uncertainty, an organization copies the behavior of another. New organizations take older organizations as a model and this results in homogeneity in the institutional environment (DiMaggio; Powell, 1983b). Furthermore, organizations tend to imitate organizations that they consider legitimate and successful (Morgan; Kristensen, 2006).

Normative isomorphism, on the other hand, results from professionalization, since professionals are influenced by forcing regulations, as well as organizations (DiMaggio; Powell, 1983b). Different professionals may have different characteristics, but they have many similarities with their professional peers, as they suffer pressure from the State, as well as from professional categories. In addition, organizations select professionals who fit within expected criteria, such as clothing, adequate vocabulary, and professional training, which makes professionals homogeneous.

In this context, it is observed that isomorphic mechanisms restrict the behavior of organizations. Scott (1995) adds that these mechanisms derive from structures, activities and regulatory, normative and cultural-cognitive pressures, which provide meaning to social behavior. According to Chua and Rahman (2011), each of these pressures derives from an isomorphism of DiMaggio and Powell (1983). Scott's regulatory pressure is the coercive isomorphism in the typology of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the normative pressure is similar to the normative isomorphism and, in turn, the cognitive pressure is similar to the mimetic isomorphism.

Regulatory pressures comprise rules and regulations established by law or endorsed by public opinion, which have the power to encourage certain behaviors and discourage others (SCOTT, 1995). Normative pressures set the standard for acceptable organizational behavior and encourage organizations to follow it (Scott, 1995). In this way, certifications and codes of conduct followed by organizations can be examples of regulatory pressures. These normative pressures can be defined by the media, industry associations, NGOs, among other actors (Tran; Beddewela, 2020).

Finally, cultural-cognitive pressures refer to the way in which individuals or organizations perceive and interpret reality through previous pressures (Scott, 1995). Thus, to understand institutions, one must consider not only the objective conditions, but also the subjective interpretation of the actors. Therefore, organizations that adopt structures widely accepted by society tend to have more legitimate actions.

2.2.1 Institutional voids

Institutions emerge to reduce uncertainties in human relationships and in the social contract between an organization and its stakeholders. Thus, the presence of weak institutions results in an environment of uncertainty for business, creating institutional voids (Brix-Asala; Seuring, 2020). Institutional voids are failures of existing national institutions to efficiently support the market (Khanna & Palepu, 1997). Following this perspective, Mair and Marti (2009) define these institutional voids as situations in which the institutional arrangements that support business are absent, weak or do not fulfill the role that is expected of them.

Institutional voids occur when there is a lack of formal and informal institutions such as government, laws, cultural and local understandings to facilitate transactions between sellers and buyers (Turker; Altuntas Vural, 2017a). Corroborating with the authors above, Pinkham and Peng (2017) define institutional voids as contexts in which market support institutions and

contract enforcement are lacking to facilitate transactions between organizations and individuals.

Mair, Martí and Ventresca (2012) state that institutional voids should not be understood as the absence of institutions, because they often exist. However, they must be understood as inefficient institutions with fragile formal structures and high levels of corruption. These weak institutions result in economic and social problems, as not everyone can participate in the market equally. Thus, institutional voids can cause poverty, unemployment, crime and social exclusion (Colovic; Schruoffeneger, 2021a).

Given this, the concept of institutional voids can be characterized in all types of economy (Liedong et al., 2020a), however it is especially important in emerging markets, since in these environments there is greater political instability, violence and macroeconomic fluctuations (Gao et al., 2017). These markets lack institutions that facilitate transactions between organizations, as well as banks cannot always guarantee access to credit, courts cannot guarantee compliance with intellectual property rights, and the presence of corruption hinders the development of organizations (Mccarthy; Puffer, 2016).

The concept of institutional voids was divided into formal and informal, based on the idea of formal and informal institutions, developed by (North, 1991). Although most studies that use Institutional Theory as a theoretical support have struggled to understand the functioning of formal institutions, informal institutions play a relevant role in the development of an institutional environment (Tran; Beddewela, 2020).

Formal institutions are formalized rules, laws and regulations that prescribe what is socially accepted (North, 1991) and provide an adequate structure composed of regulatory agencies, capital and labor markets and infrastructure elements such as communication, public services and transport (Khoury; Prasad, 2016). Following this logic, formal institutional voids are the failure of formal institutions (laws, regulations, infrastructure and support apparatus) to assist and facilitate transactions between organizations and people (Webb; Khoury; Hitt, 2020).

According to Živojinović, Ludvig and Hognl (2019), formal institutional voids can take different forms, such as ill-defined regulations, lack of minimum sources of investment provided by the State and poorly developed infrastructure. Furthermore, the absence of educational organizations that empower people and the absence of institutionalized intermediary bodies are also examples of formal institutional voids.

In turn, informal institutions are characterized by sanctions, customs, traditions and codes of conduct (North, 1991). Based on this definition, Webb, Khoury and Hitt (2020) define informal institutional voids as the inability of norms, values and beliefs and their representations

to facilitate stable, efficient and effective transactions and processes that contribute to the development of productive markets.

Informal institutional voids are greater in societies where certain individuals based on their gender, ethnicity, age or other attributes do not have the status or properties to participate in market activities (Živojinović; Ludvig; Hegl, 2019a). Thus, this type of void is characterized by beliefs and values that support patriarchal systems, based on caste and apartheid, which exclude certain individuals from economic transactions, placing them at a disadvantage in the market (Webb; Khoury; Hitt, 2020).

This idea of institutional voids has been employed in various fields, most notably in economics, management, and international business. Despite this, this approach is not free from criticism (Bothello; Nason; Schnyder, 2019b) warn that the concept should not be used broadly. For example, Santangelo and Meyer (2011) consider that unions, a dominant feature in many continental European economies, contribute to institutional voids, since negotiations with unions create a rigidity that slows down processes.

Furthermore, the term “institutional voids” has been used to designate only formal market-supporting institutions, such as property rights, financial access, rule of law, and courts. However, certain informal institutions such as culture, family and religion can also create institutional voids (Bothello; Nason; Schnyder, 2019b). Bothello, Nason and Schnyder (2019) also suggest that institutional voids vary within the same institutional environment, that is, within the same country.

Table 1 presents examples of formal and informal voids according to previous studies (Bothello; Nason; Schnyder, 2019b; Colovic; Schruoffeneger, 2021a; Parthasarathy; Dey; Gupta, 2021a; Turker; Altuntas Vural, 2017a; Webb; Khoury; Hitt, 2020; Živojinović; Ludvig; Hegl, 2019a).

Table 1. Examples of institutional voids found in the literature

Institutional Voids	
Formal	Informal
Formalized laws, rules, systems, and regulations	Norms, values, and beliefs of society
Regulatory agencies	Codes of conduct, standards of behavior and conventions
Capital and labor market	Social exclusion, marginalization and stigma
Infrastructure (communication, public services, or transport)	Caste-based, apartheid, or patriarchal systems that exclude certain groups of individuals from participating in economic transactions
Property rights	Beliefs based on gender, ethnicity, and age
Minimum capital market options and investment sources	Trust in society actors
Educational institutions	Corruption (acceptance of misuse of power by political elites for their own enrichment)

Source: Prepared by the author based on previous studies (Bothello *et al.*, 2019; Colovic; Schruoffeneger, 2021; Parthasarathy *et al.*, 2021; Turker; Altuntas Vural, 2017; Webb *et al.*, 2020; Živojinović *et al.*, 2019).

The table above presents a typology of institutional voids, distinguishing between formal and informal dimensions. Formal voids refer to the absence or dysfunction of codified institutions such as laws, regulatory frameworks, capital markets, and infrastructure. These voids can hinder market development and create barriers for social enterprises by limiting access to essential services like financing, education, or reliable public utilities. For example, weak property rights or underdeveloped capital markets may prevent social enterprises from securing investment or scaling their operations effectively.

In contrast, informal institutional voids arise from the absence or erosion of socially accepted norms, values, and conventions that support inclusive economic participation. These include deeply entrenched forms of social exclusion, such as caste systems, patriarchal norms, or racial hierarchies, as well as widespread acceptance of corruption or distrust in public institutions. Such informal voids create intangible but powerful obstacles for social enterprises, particularly those working with marginalized communities. They may limit not only access to economic opportunities but also trust, legitimacy, and collaboration at the local level.

By distinguishing between formal and informal voids, the table underscores the multifaceted challenges social enterprises face in developing countries. However, it also suggests that certain types of institutional voids, though often less pronounced, can be found even in developed economies, where bureaucratic rigidity, market concentration, or cultural inertia may similarly hinder innovation and inclusion. This reinforces the need for context-sensitive strategies, as organizations must often navigate overlapping regulatory shortcomings and socio-cultural barriers. Understanding these dual layers of institutional voids is therefore

essential for analyzing how social enterprises operate, adapt, and contribute to institutional transformation across diverse and complex environments.

2.3 Institutional Voids and Social Enterprises

2.3.1 Evidences from the previous literature

This section reviews the existing literature to identify prior studies that have investigated the relationship between institutional voids and social enterprises. It provides a foundation for the present research by revealing underexplored gaps, outlining the methodological approaches employed to date, and mapping the geographical and contextual settings in which these studies have been conducted.

The search was limited to studies published up to December 2024, because this review was conducted in March 2025. This study adopted the following terms from the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases: "institutional voids" and "social entrepreneur*" or "social innovation" or "social enterprise" or "social value" or "social business" or "social ventur*". The suggested search terms are combined using the operators "AND" and "OR", along with quotation marks, to refine and restrict the search results. Articles in English and Portuguese and articles published in the area of Business and Management were included. Theoretical essays, books, conference papers, and literature reviews were excluded to ensure the inclusion of peer-reviewed empirical studies that provide primary data and methodological consistency. This criterion aimed to enhance the reliability and comparability of findings across studies.

Related terms such as institutional context, institutional environment, and institutional development were deliberately excluded from the search strategy. As Bothello, Nason, and Schnyder (2019) caution, not all institutional phenomena can be accurately categorized as institutional voids. According to these authors, terms like institutional context and institutional environment should not be treated as interchangeable with institutional voids, as they refer to conceptually distinct aspects of institutional theory. Similarly, weak institutions was not included because it denotes institutional fragility or poor enforcement, whereas institutional voids concern the absence of structures or mechanisms altogether.

The selection process followed two stages: (1) screening of titles and abstracts and (2) full reading of the text to extract the following information: title, objective, research question, context, methods, main findings and implications. Figure 1 presents the sample selection process in the WoS and Scopus databases.

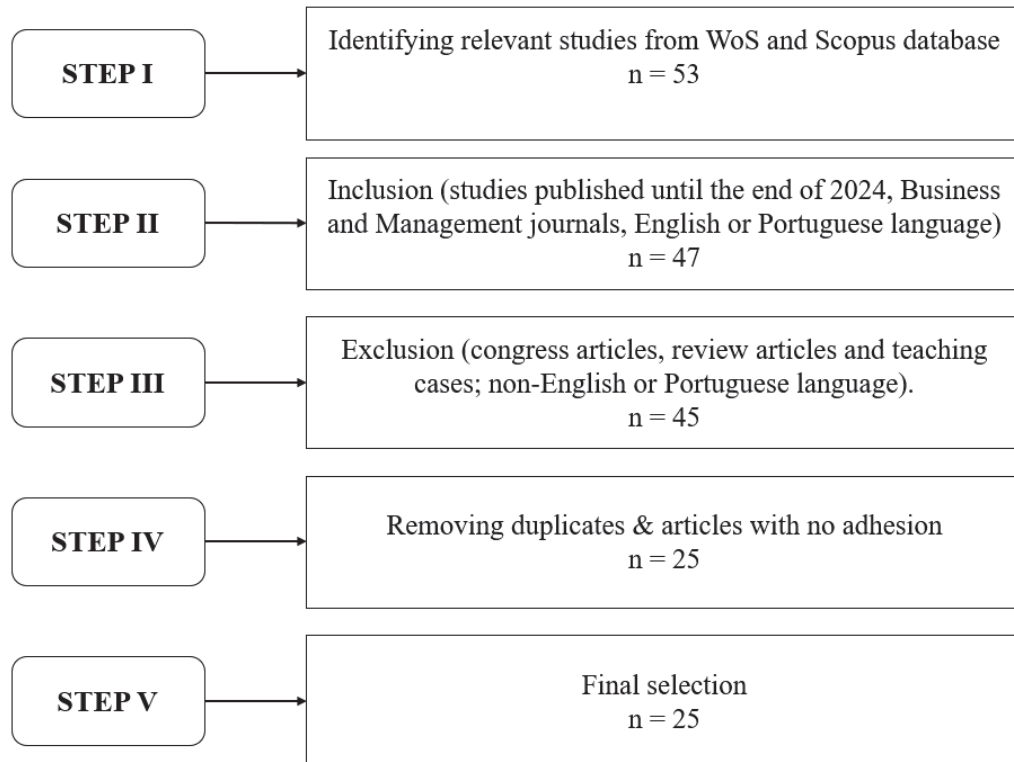


Figure 1. Steps for revising literature
Source: Author' own creation (2026).

The Table 2 presents a synthesis of academic studies that explore the relationship between institutional voids and social enterprises. The review reveals a growing scholarly interest in the topic, with a noticeable increase in publications over the past decade. The most active years were 2020 and 2024, each marking a significant peak in research output. This rise reflects a broader academic engagement with themes such as inclusive innovation, hybrid organizing, and the role of entrepreneurship in institutionally weak contexts.

A striking feature of the reviewed literature is the geographic concentration of studies in emerging and developing economies, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Kenya, Malawi, South Africa), South Asia (especially India), and Latin America (Brazil and Mexico). These regions often present pronounced institutional voids, making them natural laboratories for studying how social enterprises address unmet social and economic needs. Fewer studies focus on developed contexts (e.g., Canada and Germany), although those that do tend to emphasize institutional complexity, hybridity, or legitimacy-seeking behavior rather than voids per se.

Table 2. Previous studies

Authors	Year	Purpose	Method	Context
Bjerregaard and Lauring (2012)	2012	This paper responds to calls to make more explicit linkages between institutional theory and entrepreneurship research through studies on how entrepreneurs navigate and work with institutions. This paper develops the institutional configuration perspective to understand which national contexts facilitate social entrepreneurship (SE).	Ethnographic study (participant observation, semi-structured interviews)	Malawi
Tephan, Uhlener and Stride (2015)	2015	The present cross-national study aims to explore the factors that are associated with a country's share of social start-ups in the total number of start-ups and contributes to the emerging stream of literature that explores the contextual drivers of different types of entrepreneurship.	Secondary data	26 countries
Hoogendoorn (2016)	2016	This article sheds light on different degrees of hybridity of a range of organizations operating in a (post-)conflict region. We provide an ethnographic account of how social entrepreneurs in the Safe Water for Africa program	Secondary data	49 countries
Kolk and Lenfant (2016)	2016	made sense of hybrid goods, as well as how and why those understandings affected both the social enterprise's marketing mix and stakeholders' expectations of the enterprise's rights and responsibilities. This article examines how national systems of innovation (NSI) and social entrepreneurship interact to generate social innovation in emerging economies. This study aims to contribute to the literature by exploring and describing the inter-linkages between institutional voids (IVs)/institutional supports (ISs) perspectives and SI process by positioning the	Survey and 25 structured interviews	Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda
McMullen and Bergman (2017)	2017		152 semi-structured interviews	African countries
Rao-Nicholson, Vorley and Khan (2017a)	2017		Single case study (20 semi-structured interviews)	India
Turker and Altuntas Vural (2017b)	2017		Secondary data (34 social enterprises)	Turkey

Živojinović, Ludvig and Hognl (2019b)	2019	actor as the catalyzer and the change-agent. This paper analyses nine social innovations in rural areas in Serbia, based on in-depth interviews and document analysis. This paper aims to analyses how processes of institutional change in environments of	Nine case studies (9 semi-structured interviews)	Serbia
Luiz, Kachika and Kudzurunga (2019)	2019	institutional 'voids' affect smallholder farmer market access in Zambia and Malawi, and explores the role of different dis/enabling institutional agents and logics. This paper sheds some light on how social ventures that operate within the	Two case studies (25 semi-structured interviews)	Zambia and Malawi
Mzembe <i>et al.</i> (2019)	2019	Malawian tourism and hospitality industry use institutional bricolage in order to address institutional constraints they face in pursuit of social value. This paper aims to understand which institutional factors have influenced social	Four case study (22 semi-structured interviews)	Malawi
Agostini, Bitencourt and Vieira (2020)	2020	innovation and how a coffee production initiative has transformed the reality in which it operates.	Single case study (13 semi-structured interviews)	Mexico
De SILVA <i>et al.</i> (2020)	2020	This paper addresses this gap to further the understanding of opportunity co-creation by social enterprises.	Ten case studies	Emerging economies (Cambodia, Ghana, India, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Vietnam, and Zambia)
De Beule, Klein and Verwaal (2020)	2020	This study responds to and contributes to these debates in the social enterprise literature by looking for a deeper understanding of the relationship between social impact, institutions, and financial performance of social enterprises.	Survey (143 firms)	Multiple countries
Parthiban <i>et al.</i> (2020)	2020	The paper inquires the case of a social entrepreneurial venture in India that	Single case study (23 semi-structured interviews)	India

Sahasranamam and Nandakumar (2020)	2020	<p>identified two complementary institutional voids (productive ageing void of the urban elderly and rural education void of children) and attempted to simultaneously address the two voids.</p> <p>This paper aims to examine the contingent role of a country's formal institutions (financial, educational, and political) in the relationship between individual capital (financial, human, and social) and social entrepreneurship entry.</p>	Secondary data	53 countries
Torres and Augusto (2020a)	2020	<p>This study examines the influence of digitalization and social entrepreneurship on national well-being.</p> <p>The study addresses the crucial issue of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and institutional voids in the peri-urban geographies of India.</p> <p>This research investigates how an innovative social business model acts on institutional voids and creates social value for deprived communities.</p>	Secondary data	27 countries
Goyal, Agrawal and Sergi (2021)	2021	<p>The paper discusses the wicked nature of visual-impairment, which is both widely prevalent and has biopsychosocial attributes i.e., the functional limitations are reinforced by the psychological perceptions of the blind and visually impaired (BVI), and the sociological stigma of impairment.</p> <p>This research aims to investigate how cultural entrepreneurship within social enterprises fosters the creation of cross-sector partnerships that generate social value by legitimizing local food procurement practices in large, established organizations.</p>	Three case studies	India
Colovic and Schruoffeneger (2021b)	2021	<p>This study adopts a business model perspective for analyzing social value</p>	Single case study (21 semi-structured interviews)	Brazil
Parthasarathy; Dey and Gupta (2021b)	2021	<p>This research aims to investigate how cultural entrepreneurship within social enterprises fosters the creation of cross-sector partnerships that generate social value by legitimizing local food procurement practices in large, established organizations.</p>	Case study (conversation between the authors)	India
Hedberg and Lounsbury (2021)	2021	<p>This study adopts a business model perspective for analyzing social value</p>	Ethnographic study (participant observation and semi-structured interviews)	Canada
Lashitew, Van Tulder and Muche (2022a)	2022	<p>This study adopts a business model perspective for analyzing social value</p>	Single case study (32 semi-structured interviews)	Kenya

Sydow et al. (2022a)	2022	creation processes that span organizational boundaries. The study investigates the practices followed by 47 commercial entrepreneurs in Kenya to “work around” these severe institutional voids to achieve their goals of business creation and growth.	47 semi-structured interviews	Kenya
Fu and Yan (2024)	2024	This study draws on institutional theory to provide insights into how new forms of organizations gain legitimacy under institutional voids.	42 semi-structured interviews	China
Nwauche and Claeeyé (2024)	2024	This paper examines institutional voids as a possible impediment to harnessing and articulating the contributions of social enterprises towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South Africa.	55 semi-structured interviews	South Africa
Reinecke and Wrona (2024)	2024	This research emphasizes the critical role of ‘social enterprise referents’ in reconciling divergent interests and organizing nascent fields around new models to address complex societal problems	77 semi-structured interviews	Germany

Source: Author’ own creation (2026).

In terms of methodology, the majority of studies adopt qualitative approaches, particularly case studies and semi-structured interviews, which allow for in-depth analysis of how actors navigate institutional constraints and enact social innovation. Ethnographic methods and participant observation are used less frequently but offer rich, context-sensitive insights (e.g., Bjerregaard; Luring, 2012; Hedberg; Lounsbury, 2020). There is also a subset of studies employing secondary data and cross-national comparisons (e.g., Stephan et al., 2015; Hoogendoorn, 2016), which contribute to generalizable insights on the institutional determinants of social entrepreneurship.

A review of the studies summarized in the table reveals several consistent patterns that help clarify the positioning and contribution of the present research. First, there is a strong methodological concentration in qualitative approaches, particularly single or multiple case studies and semi-structured interviews. While these designs generate rich contextual insights, they also indicate a field still dominated by exploratory and interpretive investigations, with

limited use of integrative analytical frameworks capable of systematically comparing different institutional dimensions. Large-scale quantitative studies do exist, but they tend to rely on secondary cross-national datasets and focus primarily on macro-level relationships, often overlooking how institutional mechanisms operate simultaneously at multiple levels. This methodological polarization suggests a gap for studies that conceptually integrate micro-organizational dynamics with broader institutional structures.

Second, the literature shows a clear geographical pattern. Most empirical studies are concentrated in African and Asian contexts—such as Malawi, Kenya, India, China, and South Africa—or in cross-national datasets. Research conducted in Latin America is scarce, and within this limited subset, Brazil appears only once as a single case study. This distribution indicates that current theoretical generalizations about institutional voids and social enterprises are largely grounded in evidence from specific regional clusters rather than globally diversified contexts. Consequently, there is room for research that both expands geographic representation and examines whether existing theoretical assumptions hold under different institutional configurations.

Third, the analysis highlights a conceptual tendency to treat institutional voids primarily as constraints or barriers that social enterprises must overcome. Even when studies recognize entrepreneurial agency, they often focus on adaptation strategies such as bricolage, legitimacy building, or workaround practices. Fewer works explicitly examine reciprocal dynamics in which social enterprises not only respond to institutional environments but also actively reshape them. Likewise, although some studies address formal institutions and others emphasize informal norms, very few investigate both dimensions simultaneously or analyze their interaction. This indicates an underexplored theoretical space concerning the co-evolution between organizations and institutional arrangements.

Finally, the purposes stated across the studies reveal that much of the existing literature seeks to understand whether institutions matter, which institutional factors influence social entrepreneurship, or how organizations cope with constraints. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to explaining how different types of institutional voids operate together, how they differentially affect organizational development, and how social enterprises mitigate them through their impact activities. This pattern reinforces the relevance of research designs structured around differentiated objectives (such as distinguishing formal and informal voids, examining organizational responses, and analyzing feedback effects) because such designs move beyond descriptive or correlational insights toward a more explanatory and mechanism-oriented understanding of institutional dynamics.

Table 3 presents the distribution of the selected articles across academic journals, highlighting where research on institutional voids and social enterprises has been published. A total of 25 articles were identified, with publications dispersed across a wide range of journals, suggesting that the field is interdisciplinary and still emerging in terms of scholarly consolidation.

Table 3. Number of articles published by journal

Journal	ABS list	Frequency	Percentage
Technological Forecasting & Social Change	3	4	0.16
Business & Society	3	2	0.08
Organization Science	4*	1	0.04
Journal of International Business Studies	4*	1	0.04
Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	4*	1	0.04
Journal of World Business	4	1	0.04
Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal	4	1	0.04
Journal of Management Studies	4	1	0.04
European Management Review	3	1	0.04
Management and Organization Review	3	1	0.04
Industrial Marketing Management	3	1	0.04
Journal of Small Business Management	3	1	0.04
Information Systems Frontiers	3	1	0.04
Journal of Business Research	3	1	0.04
Business Horizons	2	1	0.04
Society and Business Review	2	1	0.04
Journal of Social Entrepreneurship	2	1	0.04
International Review of Applied Economics	1	1	0.04
Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal	1	1	0.04
Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	1	1	0.04
Sustainability	0	1	0.04
Total	--	25	1.00

Source: Author' own creation (2026).

A notable observation is that several articles appeared in high-ranking journals (ABS 4* and 4), including Organization Science, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, Journal of Management Studies, and Journal of International Business Studies. Although these only represent single contributions each (4%), their presence indicates a growing legitimacy and scholarly relevance of the topic within the top-tier academic community. This is a positive sign for the maturation of the field, showing that studies on institutional voids and social enterprises are increasingly recognized in mainstream management and entrepreneurship scholarship.

Using data extracted from the selected literature, Figure 2 was generated using VosViewer software to visualize the keyword co-occurrence network. This map provides a clear representation of the intellectual structure and thematic priorities within the research connecting institutional voids and social enterprises. The visualization reveals several distinct clusters of frequently co-occurring keywords, which correspond to key focal areas in the scholarly discourse.

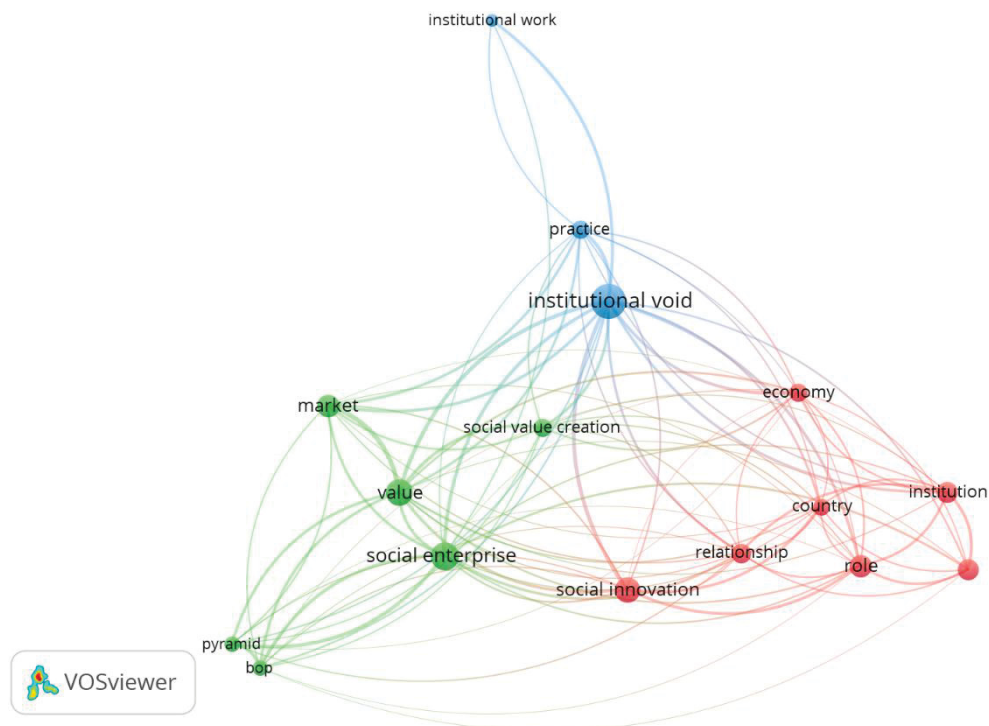


Figure 2. VOSviewer output with the thematic network of co-occurring keywords
Source: Author' own creation (2026).

One prominent cluster centers on terms such as “institutional voids,” “institutional work,” and “practice,” underscoring a strong emphasis on how actors engage with and navigate institutional deficiencies through ongoing institutional work and practical interventions. This cluster highlights the dynamic processes by which social enterprises respond to and attempt to fill institutional voids.

Another notable cluster includes keywords such as “social innovation,” “institution,” “economy,” and “country,” suggesting a focus on the broader systemic and contextual factors that influence social innovation within varying institutional and economic environments. This cluster reflects attention to how social enterprises contribute to economic development and institutional change at national and regional levels.

A third cluster revolves around terms like “social entrepreneurship,” “value,” “social value creation,” “bottom of pyramid,” and “market,” illustrating interest in the mechanisms through which social enterprises create social and economic value, particularly within underserved or marginalized markets. This cluster emphasizes the intersection between entrepreneurial activity and social impact, especially among populations at the base of the economic pyramid.

Although the literature on institutional voids and social enterprises has expanded significantly in recent years (Stephan; Uhlaner; Stride, 2015; De Silva *et al.*, 2020; Lashitew; Tulder; Muche, 2022), several critical gaps remain. One notable limitation is the predominant national-level focus of most studies, which tends to overlook subnational heterogeneity in institutional contexts. While cross-country analyses (Hoogendoorn, 2016; Sahasranamam; Nandakumar, 2020) have offered valuable insights into how formal institutions shape social entrepreneurship, they often assume a level of institutional homogeneity within national borders that does not reflect local realities.

Emerging economies like Brazil, India, and South Africa, frequently cited in the literature (Colovic ;Schruoffenegger, 2021; Parthiban *et al.*, 2020; Nwauche; Claeys, 2024), are marked by substantial regional disparities in Human Development Index (HDI), infrastructure, and access to basic services. For instance, Brazil exhibits wide differences between its urban centers and rural or peripheral regions, where institutional voids manifest in unique ways. Even within the same city, different neighborhoods may offer contrasting institutional logics, resources, and constraints, influencing how social enterprises operate and the kinds of solutions they develop.

Yet, few studies examine how institutional voids vary within countries and how this variation influences the strategies and effectiveness of social enterprises. There is a need for localized analyses that recognize the dynamic and fragmented nature of institutional environments, even within a single national jurisdiction. Research such as that by Kolk and Lenfant (2016) and Luiz, Kachika, and Kudzurunga (2019) begins to address context-specific institutional challenges, but these still often treat the local setting as homogeneous rather than internally diverse.

2.3.2 *Exploring institutional context and social enterprises in Brazil*

Social enterprises have emerged globally as innovative organizational forms that aim to reconcile economic performance with the generation of positive social and environmental impacts. In Brazil, this phenomenon is gaining momentum within a complex and evolving institutional landscape characterized by both enabling advances and persistent structural challenges (Bravim *et al.*, 2025).

2.3.2.1 Legal Framework and Government Initiatives

Brazil currently lacks a specific legal framework that formally defines or recognizes social enterprises as a distinct category (Siqueira; Bin; Stefanuto, 2021). As a result, these organizations adopt diverse legal forms, including associations, cooperatives, and business corporations, according to their strategic objectives and operational needs. This legal fragmentation can lead to institutional uncertainty and pose barriers to accessing targeted financial mechanisms, tax benefits, and policy incentives (Comini; Fischer; D'amario, 2022).

In response to these gaps, the federal government launched the National Strategy for Investments and Impact Businesses (ENIMPACTO) under Decree No. 9.244/2017. This initiative seeks to foster a favorable institutional environment for the development of impact businesses by promoting coordination between public and private stakeholders and supporting policies, programs, and regulatory tools aimed at social innovation and entrepreneurship (Mathias; Souza; Ribeiro, 2024).

2.3.2.2 Ecosystem Support and Local Initiatives

The Brazilian support ecosystem for social enterprises has seen significant development in recent years, with the emergence of incubators, accelerators, and networks offering technical, financial, and strategic assistance. Organizations such as ANPROTEC (Brazilian Association of Science Parks and Business Incubators) have played a pivotal role in disseminating the concept of impact-driven businesses and nurturing a culture of innovation aimed at solving social problems (Faria; Lima; Ghesti, 2021).

Programs like BNDES Garagem have further strengthened this ecosystem by providing dedicated acceleration tracks for social enterprises, thereby enhancing their growth potential, financial sustainability, and operational resilience (Etchart; Comolli, 2013). In addition to government-backed initiatives, a number of private and civil society organizations have played a pivotal role in accelerating the development of social enterprises in Brazil. Notable among these are Artemisia, one of the pioneers in the field, which specializes in selecting and supporting impact businesses focused on low-income populations; Quintessa, which offers tailored acceleration programs, strategic consulting, and connections with investors for high-potential social enterprises; and Instituto Ekloos, which supports organizations through mentoring, capacity building, and social innovation projects aimed at strengthening third-sector entities, as well social businesses (Vasconcellos; Leso; Cortimiglia, 2022).

These organizations contribute not only with financial and strategic support but also with technical expertise and access to extensive networks, creating a more robust and interconnected ecosystem that fosters innovation and scalability in the social enterprise sector. Together, such initiatives illustrate the growing institutional infrastructure that is emerging to support impact-driven entrepreneurship in Brazil.

2.3.2.3 Navigating Institutional Voids

A defining characteristic of Brazil's institutional environment is the presence of institutional voids, which refer to the absence or inefficiency of formal institutions, regulatory frameworks, and public policies necessary for addressing systemic societal challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (PUFFER; MCCARTHY; JAEGER, 2016).

Social enterprises in Brazil often operate in low-governance environments, particularly in underserved rural and urban peripheries (favelas). Their localized knowledge, relational proximity, and mission-driven models enable them to deliver innovative solutions in education, healthcare, housing, and economic development (Morais-Da-Silva; Segatto; Bezerra-De-Sousa, 2020). In doing so, these organizations not only address service gaps but also challenge conventional models of welfare provision and contribute to inclusive, bottom-up development.

2.3.2.4 Evidence from Empirical Studies

A growing body of empirical research sheds light on the contextual enablers and constraints affecting social enterprises in Brazil. For example, Comini, Fischer and D'amario, (2022) argue that the effectiveness of social enterprises is significantly enhanced when their leaders acknowledge and adapt to the institutional incompleteness of the Brazilian context. These enterprises cannot tackle structural social problems, such as inequality and environmental crises, without collaborative efforts involving government, business, civil society, and academia.

Souza, Lessa and Lázaro Da Silva Filho (2019) emphasize the emergence of social enterprises in rural areas, where institutional voids are more pronounced due to limited infrastructure and public investment. Their research, along with that of Schäfer *et al.* (2021), highlights the strategic role of social enterprises in mitigating regional inequalities, particularly in the economically disadvantaged northeastern region.

In the Brazilian context, Correia, De Oliveira and Gomez (2016) emphasize that social enterprises can generate sustainable benefits by addressing specific community needs, thereby unlocking the developmental potential of underserved localities. Building on this perspective, Silva, Lazaro and Teixeira (2024) show that social enterprises in the state of Piauí face significant challenges related to limited resources and inadequate infrastructure, particularly due to insufficient governmental support.

In more developed environments, social enterprises tend to benefit from better access to resources, networks, and skilled labor. Bezerra-De-Sousa *et al.* (2022) find that these enterprises are more capable of mobilizing investments and building professional capacity. However, to effectively address social issues, they must maintain community trust, adopt affordable pricing models, and cultivate local leadership (Morais-Da-Silva *et al.*, 2022).

Andion *et al.* (2022) examine the innovation ecosystem in Florianópolis and identify three critical factors for the success of social enterprises: enabling institutional conditions (laws, governance), robust inter-organizational networks, and the experiential knowledge of social entrepreneurs. They also call for future research that moves beyond isolated case studies or single-sector analyses to consider multi-actor, systemic approaches.

2.3.2.5 Social Enterprises as Institutional Entrepreneurs

Some scholars have emphasized the role of social enterprises as institutional entrepreneurs—agents capable of driving institutional change by introducing and legitimizing new norms, practices, and solutions (Morais-Da-Silva *et al.*, 2022; Welter *et al.*, 2021). These enterprises catalyze social innovation and sustainability by acting within, against, and beyond existing institutional arrangements. However, their scalability and long-term success depend on the progression of institutional change, as weak or underdeveloped institutions can hinder their growth and impact.

In this context, the capacity of social enterprises to act as institutional entrepreneurs is often shaped by their ability to navigate and adapt to local institutional environments. In regions marked by institutional voids or low state capacity, these organizations frequently rely on grassroots legitimacy, community engagement, and cross-sector partnerships to build trust and drive change (Macías-Prada; Silva; Zapata, 2024). Their effectiveness lies not only in challenging the status quo but also creating hybrid governance models that reflect both local realities and broader development goals. As such, their role extends beyond service provision:

they contribute to institutional transformation by modeling alternative practices and influencing policy discourse (Borchardt *et al.*, 2024).

2.3.2.6 Research Gaps in Brazilian Context

Despite the growing academic interest in social enterprises in Brazil, significant theoretical and empirical gaps remain. While existing studies have touched on aspects of formal institutions, such as regulatory frameworks and government support, they often do so indirectly and without fully exploring how both formal and informal institutional voids shape the operational strategies and effectiveness of social enterprises. In particular, the literature lacks robust analyses that consider how these institutional voids influence organizational behavior in diverse socio-economic contexts.

A critical gap lies in the absence of comparative research examining how social enterprises function across neighborhoods or regions with varying levels of development within the same urban area. This type of intra-country comparison could reveal important nuances and challenge the assumption that institutional voids exert uniform effects across a nation. Such research is especially relevant in highly unequal societies like Brazil, where local disparities significantly affect entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Addressing these gaps offers a valuable opportunity to enrich existing theoretical frameworks by incorporating context-specific insights from emerging economies. As Plakoyiannaki, Wei and Prashantham (2019) argue, examining organizational behavior in the Global South not only contributes to refining dominant theoretical models but also fosters the development of new paradigms that are more attuned to the lived realities of underrepresented contexts.

2.4 Research Propositions

Formal institutions such as laws, rules and regulations provide incentives that promote what is socially acceptable (North, 1991). They offer a structure composed of regulatory agencies, capital markets, communication, public services and adequate transport (Webb; Khoury; Hitt, 2020). According to Mair, Martí and Ventresca (2012), formal institutions play an important role in the behavior of businesses and entrepreneurs in emerging economies. In countries where institutions are strong, businesses and their entrepreneurs face less uncertainty, as access to quality resources and infrastructure is facilitated (Webb *et al.*, 2010). On the other

hand, less active and engaged governments can trigger greater social need (Dacin; Dacin; Matear, 2010), which can provide a greater development of social enterprises. If formal institutions are weak or absent, compensatory structures (social enterprises) arise to stimulate the formation and operation of the market, since the existing formal institutions are not sufficient. In view of this, a first research proposition is identified:

P1: *Formal institutional voids affect the development of social enterprises.*

Informal institutions, such as values and beliefs, represent more tacit constraints on societies through codes of conduct, norms of behavior, and social conventions (North, 1991). Informal institutional voids can exist for different reasons: caste-based societies, apartheid, patriarchal system and social exclusion (Webb; Khoury; Hitt, 2020). According to De Clercq, Lim and Oh (2013), more conservative and hierarchical cultures limit the distribution of resources to all members of society, remaining centered on a reference group. The beliefs of these cultures allow elites to leverage their power and allocate financial resources in order to satisfy only their personal interests instead of promoting local development (Schnegg; Linke, 2015). Market participation is difficult in underprivileged, socially excluded and stigmatized areas (Colovic; Schruoffeneger, 2021a). Therefore, social enterprises in emerging markets can emerge from informal voids to promote local development through market access. In view of this, a second research proposition is identified:

P2: *Informal institutional voids affect the development of social enterprises.*

Previous studies have indicated that social enterprises can reduce institutional gaps, such as reducing poverty in China (Wu; Si; Yan, 2022), opportunities for professional growth and income distribution in Brazil (Colovic; Schruoffeneger, 2021a), access to education for the visually impaired in India (Parthasarathy; Dey; Gupta, 2021a). These studies analyze specific contexts in a generalized way, without considering particularities, such as levels of development, within the same city or country. The study by Di Bernardino et al. (2019) showed that in Italy, institutional quality varies between provinces, indicating that, in northern provinces, there is greater availability of intellectual and financial capital. In their essay, Bothello, Nason and Schnyder (2019) recognize that there is heterogeneity of institutional arrangements between provinces and states of the same country. Thus, using the term

institutional void to characterize an entire country may reflect analytical simplicity rather than empirical complexity (Liedong *et al.*, 2020b).

The presence of institutional voids can affect people's participation in commercial activities, as well as the proper functioning of the market (Turker; Altuntas Vural, 2017a). In environments where voids have been overcome, there is greater transparency, stability and efficiency, which facilitates entrepreneurial activities (McCarthy; Puffer, 2016). Institutional voids compromise the development of social enterprises, as they need to adapt their business models to existing regulations, which, in many cases, deal with traditional businesses (Živojinović; Ludvig; Hegl, 2019a). Furthermore, the institutional environment may fail to develop intermediary bodies to coordinate social enterprises. These bodies can play an active role in the relationship between government and social businesses, providing physical space, awards and other resources for the development of these companies (Jing; Gong, 2012; Turker; Altuntas Vural, 2017a). In environments with a greater presence of institutional voids, there are more social problems, thus necessitating the emergence of more businesses that provide viable social and economic solutions for the community (Rao-Nicholson; Vorley; Khan, 2017b). According to George *et al.* (2016), institutional voids can provide new opportunities for creating value for society. These voids expose people to social difficulties, which makes room for the development of creative and economic solutions in response to social problems (Sydow *et al.*, 2022b). Additionally, women leading social enterprises in India can help reduce the patriarchal system, as they perform activities that in the Indian social norm are practices aimed at men, such as leading organizations (Qureshi *et al.*, 2023a). In view of this, a third research proposition is identified:

P3: *The performance of social enterprises generates a positive impact on the mitigation of formal and informal institutional voids.*

The discussion presented above through the research propositions allows the derivation of a conceptual framework (Figure 3), which illustrates the relationship between formal institutional voids, informal institutional voids, and social enterprises. The model shows that voids can affect the emergence and development of social enterprises, which in turn can positively impact the alleviation of institutional voids.

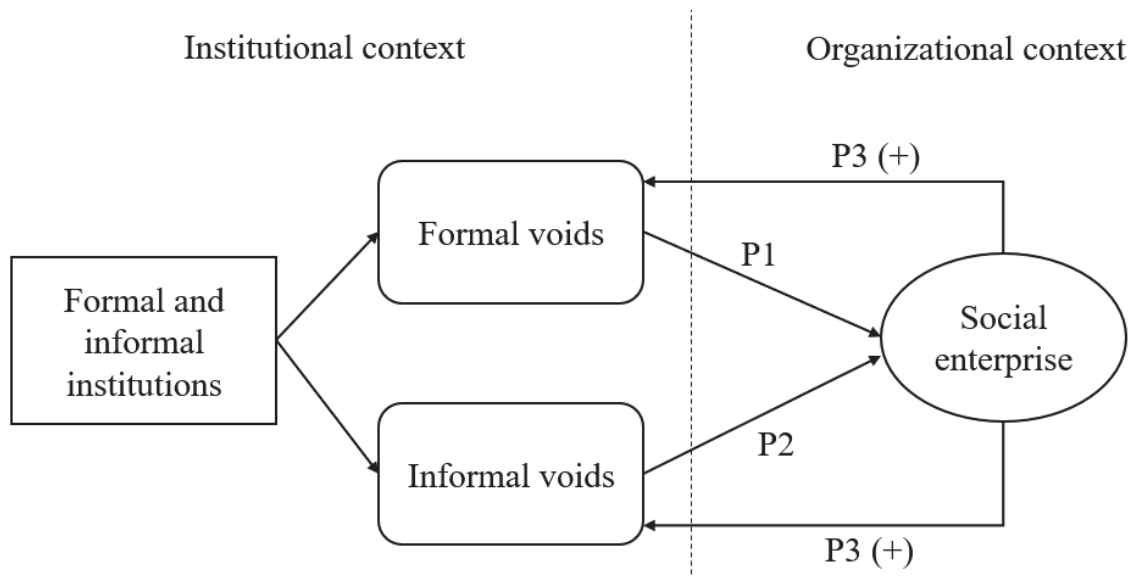


Figure 3. Conceptual framework
Source: Author' own creation (2026).

As highlighted in the theoretical framework, institutional voids arise from formal and informal institutions. As seen in Figure 3, it is argued that these institutional voids affect the creation and development of social enterprises. However, the operations of these social enterprises, especially when located in poorer regions, can work to fill institutional voids existing in national and local institutions. In this vein, this study has a two-way model.

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This section outlines the methodological procedures designed to achieve the objectives of this study. Accordingly, it is organized into six subsections, which detail the research design, case study selection, data collection methods, data analysis strategies, criteria for ensuring methodological rigor, and the anchoring framework used to support the study's analytical approach.

3.1 Research Approach

To address the research question, social enterprise initiatives in Brazil were investigated through an empirical and comparative study. This qualitative research was grounded in a case study strategy (Eisenhardt; Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2016), conducted in Brazil, one of the most unequal countries in the world (Leite; Giannotti; Gonçalves, 2022). Conducting qualitative research in emerging economies allows for the refinement of existing theories and the development of new, contextually grounded theoretical perspectives (Plakoyiannaki; Wei; Prashantham, 2019).

Qualitative approaches are particularly suited to exploring complex social phenomena, as they aim to understand human interactions, underlying meanings, and the processes that shape organizational environments (Yin, 2016). In this context, case studies serve as effective tools to uncover and interpret the phenomenon under investigation, offering a detailed and contextualized understanding (Kvale; Brinkmann, 2009). According to (Simons, 2009), a case study constitutes an in-depth, multi-perspective exploration of the complexity and uniqueness of a real-life project, institution, or system.

A multiple-case study design was adopted, which enabled the identification of categories not yet fully explored in the literature and supported analytical generalization and the transferability of findings to comparable settings (Yin, 2016). The research applied a cross-sectional temporal perspective, with data collected over a defined period. The unit and level of analysis were both organizational, focusing specifically on the functioning of social enterprises (Eisenhardt; Graebner, 2007).

3.2 Selection Of Case Studies

The selection of cases was carried out intentionally rather than randomly, in line with the principles of qualitative research, where sampling is guided by purposive or theoretical considerations rather than probabilistic or statistical criteria. This approach ensures the inclusion of cases that are most relevant to addressing the research question and uncovering in-depth insights into the phenomenon under study (Curtis *et al.*, 2000).

In this study, the cases were selected intentionally, following inclusion criteria aligned with the research objectives. The criteria for selecting participating social enterprises were as follows: (i) the enterprise is listed on the PIPE platform—a national initiative that connects social enterprises with investors and impact ecosystem enablers in Brazil; (ii) the enterprise is currently active and demonstrates market stability; (iii) the case offers theoretical relevance and contributes meaningfully to addressing the research question; and (iv) the enterprise is located in either a high-HDI or low-HDI neighborhood in the cities of São Paulo and Fortaleza.

The criterion of theoretical relevance (iii) was operationalized by considering the capacity of each enterprise to demonstrate, in practice, how social enterprises operate in urban contexts marked by socio-spatial inequalities and different levels of institutional development. Thus, priority was given to cases whose trajectories, strategies, and forms of interaction with the local environment allowed observation of how the so-called institutional voids manifest themselves and are addressed in neighborhoods with different levels of HDI within the cities of São Paulo and Fortaleza. This implied selecting organizations that were not only active but also presented concrete experiences of adaptation to structural limitations—such as unequal access to public services, infrastructure, or support networks—enabling a comparative analysis between contrasting intra-urban contexts. In this way, theoretical relevance was defined by the case's aptitude to illuminate explanatory mechanisms central to the study, contributing empirically to understanding how the territorial context shapes the strategies and impact of social enterprises.

To facilitate a comparative analysis of institutional voids while minimizing selection bias, two Brazilian cities were chosen: São Paulo and Fortaleza. These cities share several characteristics, such as being among the largest urban centers in the country and exhibiting pronounced levels of social inequality. Both cities have similar Gini coefficients (0.64 for São Paulo and 0.62 for Fortaleza) indicating high levels of income concentration (Bittencourt; Giannotti; Marques, 2021). Additionally, both urban centers are affected by elevated rates of

crime and violence, especially in low-HDI areas, which can significantly influence the operating conditions and institutional environment of social enterprises.

Despite these similarities, the cities also exhibit notable differences. São Paulo is the largest city in Brazil, serving as the country's financial and economic hub, with a highly diversified economy and more developed infrastructure. In contrast, Fortaleza, while also a major urban center, is located in the Northeast (one of the country's most socioeconomically disadvantaged regions) and has historically faced greater challenges related to poverty, public service delivery, and institutional capacity. These contrasts make the cities particularly relevant for analyzing how social enterprises navigate institutional voids in contexts marked by distinct developmental trajectories and governance structures.

In each city, four cases were selected: two social enterprises operating in neighborhoods with a high HDI, and two operating in low-HDI neighborhoods. This design enabled a cross-case comparison that captures intra-urban contrasts and sheds light on how varying levels of institutional development within the same metropolitan area affect the strategies, constraints, and contributions of social enterprises.

In this vein, social inequality in Brazilian cities creates "divided" or "broken" cities, in which people born in the poorest neighborhoods (known as favelas) do not have access to basic sanitation, quality education and job opportunities (Fernandes; Mason; Chakrabarti, 2019). In Brazil's historical development, policymakers have neglected and segregated favela populations, leading to the stigmatization of favelas as unsafe and undesirable places (Fernandes; Mason; Chakrabarti, 2019). Therefore, comparing social enterprises located in areas with different living standards can allow us to understand how institutional voids are different within the same city. Table 4 presents the eight selected cases.

Table 4. Selected cases

Cases	Sector	City	Neighborhood	HDI*	HDI level
FO1L	Food Services	Fortaleza	Bom Jardim	0.194	low
FO2L	Creative & Textile Recycling	Fortaleza	Mondubim	0.232	low
FO3H	Technology	Fortaleza	Aldeota	0.866	high
FO4H	Waste Management	Fortaleza	Meireles	0.953	high
SP1L	Employment & Job Training	São Paulo	Paraisópolis	0.639	low
SP2M	Urban Agriculture	São Paulo	Jardim Ângela	0.750	low
SP3H	Renewable Energy	São Paulo	Pinheiros	0.960	high
SP4H	Footwear	São Paulo	Bela Vista	0.940	high

*HDI data for Fortaleza was obtained from the Fortaleza City Hall (Prefeitura de Fortaleza) website, while HDI data for São Paulo was sourced from the Department of Urban Planning and Licensing (Secretaria de Urbanismo e Licenciamento). For both cities, the most recent available data is from 2022.

Source: Author' own creation (2026).

In qualitative research, generalization refers to the process by which researchers infer patterns or regularities in the social world based on carefully selected cases. Unlike statistical generalization, which relies on probabilistic sampling and numerical representativeness, qualitative generalization is grounded in the concept of social representativeness. This implies that selected cases are not intended to be statistically representative of a larger population, but rather to reflect broader social types, dynamics, or patterns. The aim is to capture the depth and diversity of the phenomenon under study, allowing for analytical generalization and the development of theoretically meaningful insights (Gobo, 2004).

It is important to note that, although Fortaleza has lower HDI than São Paulo, the social enterprises were selected in the neighborhoods with the lowest HDIs in each city. As São Paulo is the largest metropolis in Latin America, it generally has higher HDI levels than Fortaleza. This explains the difference in low HDIs for both cities.

The use of the Human Development Index (HDI) as an analytical criterion in this dissertation is justified by its multidimensional capacity to capture structural differences in living conditions across urban territories. Rather than relying solely on income-based indicators, the HDI incorporates dimensions of education, longevity, and standard of living, making it a suitable proxy for assessing variations in local development and institutional environments (Opoku et al., 2024). In the context of this study, employing HDI at the neighborhood level enables a systematic and comparable way to identify intra-urban inequalities that shape the opportunities, constraints, and operational realities of social enterprises. Thus, the index serves not merely as a descriptive statistic, but as an analytical tool that supports case selection, strengthens the comparative design, and enhances the study's capacity to link empirical observations to broader theoretical discussions on institutional voids, territorial disparities, and inclusive development.

3.3 Data Collection

After the selection of cases, the identified social enterprises were contacted via email and/or telephone. During this initial contact, the purpose of the research and the rationale for their inclusion in the study were clearly communicated. Details regarding the data collection procedures, as well as the potential benefits of participation, were also explained. Upon receiving confirmation of willingness to participate, interviews were scheduled and held in October 2025.

Ethical research standards were strictly observed throughout the process. Participants were assured of their right to privacy, and the principle of informed consent was upheld. Accordingly, all interviewees were requested to sign a consent and confidentiality agreement, as outlined in the Appendix 1. The study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), under CAAE No. 66310122.5.0000.0214, with official approval registered under Opinion No. 7.894.637, issued in 2025.

Data were collected through 24 semi-structured interviews (primary data) and an analysis of company documents found online (secondary data). Interviews were conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams with key informants from each selected social enterprise. These informants typically included the founder or owner, a staff member, and a client. The inclusion of a diverse range of informants within a single case study enhances the depth of analysis and strengthens the overall reliability of the research findings (Biernacki; Waldorf, 1981). As McKenna and Main (2013) emphasize, interviews with key informants provide access to insights that are often difficult to obtain through other sources. Table 5 shows the duration of each interview.

Table 5. Duration of interviews by case and participant type

Cases	Interview 1 (Owner)	Interview 2 (Staff)	Interview 3 (Client)	Total duration
FO1L	46 min.	30 min.	11 min.	87 min.
FO2L	46 min.	29 min.	8 min.	83 min.
FO3H	76 min.	33 min.	37 min.	146 min.
FO4H	40 min.	43 min.	11 min.	94 min.
SP1L	39 min.	24 min.	18 min.	81 min.
SP2M	65 min.	31 min.	16 min.	112 min.
SP3H	52 min.	35 min.	34 min.	121 min.
SP4H	70 min.	27 min.	24 min.	121 min.
Total duration	434 min.	252 min.	148 min.	845 min.

Source: Author' own creation (2026).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their capacity to capture rich, in-depth insights, lived experiences, and nuanced perspectives from individuals directly involved in the management and daily operations of social enterprises. This format is particularly suitable for research with a small number of participants and allows for the flexibility to explore emergent themes beyond the scope of the initial interview guide. Moreover, this approach enables the researcher to follow unanticipated lines of inquiry, thus enhancing the depth and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study (Scheuerle; Schmitz, 2016).

The interview guide was structured into four thematic sections: (1) general background on the social enterprise and its founder; (2) operational and structural characteristics of the

organization and its impact on society; (3) questions focused on social impact and institutional voids; and (4) concluding reflections on the future trajectory of the business. The complete interview guide is presented in the Appendix 2.

For company owners, the interview covered the entire questionnaire. For employees, it focused on the operational and structural characteristics of the organization, as well as questions on social impact and institutional voids. For customers, only the questions concerning the company's societal impact were asked.

In line with the funnel approach, interviews began with broader, exploratory questions and gradually narrowed toward more specific topics (Yin, 2016) related to institutional voids and the functioning of social enterprises in the Brazilian context. To triangulate the findings, documentary evidence was also reviewed, including institutional websites, internal reports made available by the enterprises, national publications on the impact economy, and relevant press coverage.

3.4 Data Analysis

After data collection, the material was analyzed using a combination of content analysis (Bardin, 2016). Initially, all 845 minutes of interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the coding process was guided by prior literature on institutional voids, following an abductive approach. In a subsequent phase, the material was examined more openly to allow for the refinement of existing codes and the identification of new categories, particularly those related to formal and informal institutional voids that may not yet be represented in the literature, thus incorporating an inductive perspective.

The analytical process followed the five stages outlined by Bardin (2006), ensuring a structured and rigorous approach to content analysis. The first stage involved familiarization with the data, where interview transcripts and documents were read repeatedly to immerse the researcher in the material and gain a comprehensive understanding of its context. In the second stage, initial codes were generated, identifying recurring concepts, phrases, and patterns that emerged from the data. The third stage consisted of the search for potential themes, in which the codes were organized into broader thematic groups that reflected key aspects of the phenomenon under study. The fourth stage focused on the review and refinement of candidate themes, examining their internal consistency and relevance in relation to the coded data and the overall dataset. Finally, the fifth stage involved the definition and naming of themes, where clear conceptual boundaries were established for each theme, and descriptive labels were

assigned to capture their essence. This step-by-step procedure contributed to a transparent and reliable interpretation of the empirical material.

In qualitative research, conceptual definitions (CD) and operational definitions (OD) can be used to present the categories of analysis. These definitions help the researcher to measure and manipulate key constructs in data analysis. From this perspective, this study has three key constructs, of which their conceptual and operational definitions are presented.

3.4.1 *Analysis categories*

3.4.1.1 Formal institutional voids

Conceptual definition (CD): Formal institutions are formalized rules, laws, and regulations that prescribe what is socially accepted (North, 1991) and provide an appropriate structure consisting of regulatory agencies and infrastructure elements such as communication, public services, and transportation (Khoury; Prasad, 2016). In this vein, formal institutional voids are the failure of formal institutions (laws, regulations, infrastructures and support devices) to help and facilitate transactions between organizations and people (Webb *et al.*, 2020).

Operational definition (OD): This construct was assessed through the identification of formal institutional gaps such as laws, rules, regulations, regulatory agencies, infrastructure, investment sources, and educational institutions. Data were collected through interviews conducted with founders, clients and managers of social enterprises.

3.4.1.2 Informal institutional voids

Conceptual definition (CD): Informal institutions are characterized by sanctions, customs, traditions and codes of conduct (North, 1991), related to the social, behavioral and cultural issues of a society. Based on this definition, Webb *et al.* (2020) define informal institutional voids as the inability of social norms, values and beliefs and their representations to facilitate stable, efficient and effective transactions and processes that contribute to the development of productive markets. Informal institutional voids are greater in societies where certain individuals based on their gender, ethnicity, age or other attributes do not have the status or properties to participate in market activities (Živojinović *et al.*, 2019).

Operational definition (OD): This construct was operationalized by identifying informal institutional voids, including stigma, issues of social inclusion or exclusion, levels of trust in social actors, the widespread acceptance of existing social differences, patriarchal systems that marginalize certain groups from economic participation, and beliefs related to gender, age, and ethnicity. Data were gathered through interviews with founders, clients and managers of social enterprises.

3.4.1.3 Positive social and environmental impact generated for society

Conceptual definition (CD): Social enterprises have emerged as an important actor in economies, especially in emerging countries, as they generate a positive social impact. This type of organization presents innovative approaches to generating social and environmental impact, that is, the actions of these companies improve people's quality of life, provide local development, reduce poverty and violence and increase social inclusion (Colovic; Schruoffeneger, 2021), as well as this type of business tends to generate environmental innovations by increasing the product's life cycle and reusing materials that could be discarded (Jayawardhana; Fernando; Siyambalapitiya, 2022).

Operational definition (OD): This construct was operationalized by identifying factors such as: (a) job creation for community members, (b) income generation, (c) reduction of social exclusion, (d) diminishing biases related to gender, age, and ethnicity, (e) enhancement of infrastructure, (f) professional development of workers, (g) support in the formulation of laws and regulations, (h) improvement of the labor market, (i) mitigation of environmental impacts, (j) promotion of material reuse, and (l) extension of product life cycles. An analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between these factors and the perceived institutional voids. Data collection involved interviews with founders, clients and managers of social enterprises.

3.5 Rigor In Qualitative Research

Regarding internal validity, it is essential to interview a sufficient number of participants with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and roles to capture a comprehensive perspective (Rowley, 2012). As Yin (2016) emphasizes, engaging a variety of informants is a crucial strategy for deepening the understanding of the case by triangulating information, thereby strengthening the findings or uncovering potential contradictions. In this study, data

triangulation was achieved through the combined analysis of interviews and relevant documents. Moreover, multiple individuals from the same social enterprise were interviewed to ensure thoroughness, which is vital for maintaining the study's rigor and quality.

External validity pertains to the degree to which the findings can be generalized or transferred to other settings (Rowley, 2012). In this regard, analytical generalization and transferability were facilitated by providing a rich and detailed description of the data collected during the interviews, enabling the findings to be appropriately adapted and applied to similar contexts.

To further enhance the reliability of the results, the case studies were deliberately selected from neighborhoods in São Paulo and Fortaleza exhibiting varying levels of social development. This approach reduces bias arising from individual perspectives and allows for an in-depth examination of how institutional voids influence the establishment and growth of social enterprises in Brazil, thereby supporting the potential generalization of the findings.

3.6 Anchorage Table

Mazzon (1981) proposed an analysis tool that focuses on the issue of adherence and compatibility between the research model, research objectives, research hypotheses and analysis techniques for analyzing data in quantitative terms. To analyze the alignment between the fundamental aspects of the research, this model was adopted in this study, being adapted accordingly. Table 6 presents the anchorage table of this research.

Table 6. Anchorage table

Research question	Research aim	Specific objectives	Literature review	Data collect	Interview Guide Questions	Data Analysis Technique
How do institutional voids affect the creation and development of Brazilian social enterprises?	This research, aimed at solving the problem addressed, has a general objective of understanding the role of institutional voids in the development of social enterprises.	<p>Select social enterprises by analyzing their mission, motivators, and barriers;</p> <p>Analyze how formal institutional voids influence the development of social enterprises;</p> <p>Analyze how informal institutional voids influence the development of social enterprises;</p> <p>Examine how social enterprises, through their positive impact, mitigate formal and informal institutional voids in the environment.</p>	<p>Institutional voids and social enterprises</p> <p>Characterization of social enterprises</p>	<p>Semi-structured individual interview and available documents</p>	<p>Part B - Interview Guide Q. 3, 4 and 5</p> <p>Part B - Interview Guide Q. 6, 7, 8, 9,10 and 11</p> <p>Part C - Interview Guide Q. 14, 15, 16 and from 17 to 24</p> <p>Part C - Interview Guide Q. 14, 15, 16 and from 25 to 27</p> <p>Part C - Interview Guide Q. 28</p>	<p>Content analysis (Bardin, 2016).</p>

Source: Author' own creation (2026).

4 DATA ANALYSIS

This section analyses the data from the eight cases analyzed in this study, being divided into two parts. The first part presents the analyzed cases, followed by a summary table. The second part focuses on the data collected in relation to the specific objectives of the study.

4.1 Presentation Of The Cases Analysed

4.1.1 *Case study A: Where food meets social change*

This case involves a social enterprise in the food service sector, founded in 2021 and operating in the Bom Jardim neighborhood (Fortaleza city), an area with a very low Human Development Index and challenges such as high unemployment, limited access to education, and inadequate public services (Freitas, 2019). The company offers catering and buffet services that combine regional and international cuisines while simultaneously addressing social issues in the community.

The enterprise exemplifies social innovation by creating employment opportunities for marginalized groups, particularly women, and by integrating professional training with real work experience. Its business model reinvests profits into community development programs, promoting social inclusion and economic empowerment.

Through partnerships with local institutions, including a university's social gastronomy program and a local consulting organization, the enterprise effectively addresses institutional voids, such as the lack of vocational training and limited access to formal employment, demonstrating how innovative approaches in the hybrid organizations can generate measurable social impact.

4.1.2 *Case study B: Weaving empowerment from waste*

This case involves a social enterprise in the creative and textile recycling sector, founded as a collaborative atelier for women in Mondubim, a neighborhood facing social and economic challenges in Fortaleza (Freitas; Costa, 2022). The initiative was born in 2016 from the founder's personal journey of recovery from mental exhaustion and her desire to reconnect with human-centered, meaningful work.

The enterprise exemplifies social innovation by combining environmental sustainability with women's empowerment. It teaches women from marginalized communities, especially black women from peripheral areas, to create clothing, accessories, and decorative objects using textile waste discarded by local industries. This approach not only generates income but also fosters creativity, self-esteem, and financial autonomy among participants, while promoting sustainable practices that reduce textile waste in the environment.

The atelier operates in a home-based collaborative space inspired by the founder's mother, who served the community through humanized care and social engagement. This model integrates mentorship, skill-building, and social support, creating a replicable framework for addressing both economic and environmental challenges.

4.1.3 Case study C: A green bridge for conscious consumers

This case involves a technology-driven social enterprise founded in 2021 and based in the Aldeota neighborhood of Fortaleza, a high-income area (Pinto *et al.*, 2023). The platform connects sustainable businesses across Brazil to consumers seeking eco-friendly products and services, addressing challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises in reaching their target audience and expanding their impact.

The enterprise exemplifies social innovation by creating a comprehensive online hub (a "green directory"), that provides access to sustainable products, services, job opportunities, and events. This approach addresses institutional gaps by increasing visibility and support for environmentally conscious businesses that otherwise struggle to compete with larger players. By fostering a community of like-minded individuals and organizations, the platform empowers consumers to make informed sustainable choices while promoting the growth and success of small sustainable enterprises across the country.

4.1.4 Case study D: Turning trash into opportunity

This case involves a social enterprise founded in the Meireles neighborhood of Fortaleza, one of the city's highest Human Development Index areas (Pinto *et al.*, 2023). The company has been operating since 2016 and specializes in circular economy solutions, reverse logistics for packaging, and composting of organic waste, serving businesses, industries, condominiums, and other large waste generators across Brazil with efficient and sustainable waste management solutions.

The enterprise exemplifies social innovation by transforming society's relationship with solid waste and promoting environmental stewardship and corporate responsibility. Its services include supporting companies in meeting legal requirements for reverse logistics, implementing selective waste collection programs that combine operational efficiency with environmental education, and providing medium-scale on-site composting systems that convert organic waste into high-quality fertilizer.

The company's initiatives directly generate positive socio-environmental impact by fostering inclusion of waste pickers and recycling cooperatives, promoting local circular economies, and contributing to the regeneration of urban and rural ecosystems.

4.1.5 Case study E: Opening doors where they were closed

This case involves a socio-economic social enterprise founded in 2017 in the Paraisópolis favela of São Paulo, a community facing high levels of social vulnerability (Boullosa; Peres, 2022). The initiative connects residents of marginalized communities to employment opportunities and professional training, acting as a bridge between local talent and partner companies seeking to promote social inclusion.

The enterprise exemplifies social innovation by providing comprehensive support beyond job listings. Its physical office in Paraisópolis offers professional training, interview preparation, skills development, and resources such as a "Candidate Kit" that includes transportation, meals, and basic materials for attending interviews. This holistic approach helps overcome barriers such as limited access to technology and financial constraints.

Since its inception, the initiative has impacted tens of thousands of people, including young apprentices, older professionals, and residents in vulnerable situations. Partnerships with major organizations expand its reach and effectiveness.

4.1.6 Case study F: Planting food, growing community

This case involves a socio-environmental social enterprise focused on urban agriculture, founded in 2019 and operating in Jardim Ângela, São Paulo, one of the most underserved and high-risk neighborhoods in Latin America (Klein, 2019). The enterprise aims to transform local production and consumption patterns while directly impacting social well-being through environmental care and education.

The initiative exemplifies social innovation by producing fresh, locally sourced food, reducing carbon footprints, and providing access to nutritious meals. It also fosters knowledge transfer, connecting community members with agricultural practices and ancestral traditions, and creating spaces for learning about sustainable living.

The enterprise promotes social well-being by encouraging urban farming practices that educate residents about environmental protection and provide tools for accessing balanced nutrition. It creates inclusive community spaces designed to welcome people from all social backgrounds, offering experiences that integrate food production, environmental awareness, culture, and art. By generating employment, income, and sustainable practices, the initiative contributes to the construction of resilient and empowered communities.

4.1.7 Case study G: *From waste to watts*

This case involves a social enterprise founded in 2018 in the Pinheiros neighborhood of São Paulo, a high-income area (Girotti *et al.*, 2024). The enterprise develops and implements scalable sustainable technologies, such as biodigesters and biotoilets, providing basic sanitation, biogas, and biofertilizer to underserved populations, schools, and other sectors.

The initiative exemplifies social innovation by transforming organic waste into renewable energy and fertilizer while promoting environmental stewardship. It addresses institutional voids such as insufficient sanitation infrastructure, limited access to clean energy in vulnerable communities, and gaps in environmental education. The enterprise generates measurable social and environmental impact by improving resource management, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and empowering communities through technology and training.

4.1.8 Case study H: *Crafting style from scraps*

This case involves a social enterprise founded in 2019 in the Bela Vista neighborhood of São Paulo, a high-HDI area (Girotti *et al.*, 2024). The enterprise specializes in creating unique footwear and accessories from recycled materials collected across the city, supporting circular economy practices and reducing urban solid waste.

The initiative exemplifies social innovation by integrating sustainability with social inclusion. It incorporates discarded textiles, offcuts from insole production, and eventually plastic waste into products, transforming materials that would otherwise be discarded into distinctive designs. Packaging is minimized or replaced with reusable fabric bags, reinforcing

zero-waste principles. The enterprise also actively promotes gender diversity and LGBTQIA+ inclusion through its product lines, ensuring marginalized groups are represented and engaged.

By addressing institutional voids such as lack of infrastructure for recycling, limited support for small-scale sustainable production, and barriers to socially inclusive entrepreneurship, the enterprise empowers local artisans and fosters awareness of sustainable practices. The organization is also exploring 3D printing with recycled plastics to further enhance sustainability, demonstrating a commitment to innovative solutions that combine ecological impact with community engagement.

4.1.9 Case overview

The Table 7 summarizes the main characteristics of the interviewees across the eight case studies. It includes the year each enterprise was founded, the sector in which it operates, and basic details about the interviewees (coded by gender and reference identifiers). This structure allows the reader to easily trace citations in the analysis while preserving anonymity.

Table 7. Summary of selected cases

Case	Year Founded	Sector	Interviewee	Gender	Reference in analyzes
FO1L	2021	Food Service	Interviewee 1	Female	FO1L_I1
			Interviewee 2	Female	FO1L_I2
			Interviewee 3	Female	FO1L_I3
FO2L	2016	Textile Recycling	Interviewee 4	Female	FO2L_I4
			Interviewee 5	Female	FO2L_I5
			Interviewee 6	Female	FO2L_I6
FO3H	2021	Technology	Interviewee 7	Male	FO3H_I7
			Interviewee 8	Male	FO3H_I8
			Interviewee 9	Male	FO3H_I9
FO4H	2016	Waste Management	Interviewee 10	Female	FO4H_I10
			Interviewee 11	Female	FO4H_I11
			Interviewee 12	Female	FO4H_I12
SP1L	2017	Employment & Training	Interviewee 13	Female	SP1L_I13
			Interviewee 14	Female	SP1L_I14
			Interviewee 15	Female	SP1L_I15
SP2M	2019	Urban Agriculture	Interviewee 16	Female	SP2M_I16
			Interviewee 17	Male	SP2M_I17
			Interviewee 18	Female	SP2M_I18
SP3H	2018	Renewable Energy	Interviewee 19	Male	SP3H_I19
			Interviewee 20	Male	SP3H_I20
			Interviewee 21	Female	SP3H_I21
SP4H	2019	Footwear	Interviewee 22	Male	SP4H_I22
			Interviewee 23	Male	SP4H_I23
			Interviewee 24	Male	SP4H_I24

Source: Author' own creation (2026).

4.2 Mission, Motivators And Barriers

4.2.1 Case study FOIL: Where food meets social change

According to the founder (FO1L_I1), “the purpose of the social enterprise is to solve a social problem, which was the lack of opportunities and income generation, focusing on women and the LGBTQ+ population”. Located in the Bom Jardim neighborhood, one of the areas with the lowest HDI in Fortaleza (Freitas, 2019), the social enterprise aims to create social impact, providing employment opportunities in a sector traditionally dominated by men and reinvesting its profits in mental health initiatives.

The primary motivation for the enterprise arose from recognizing local social needs, especially during the pandemic, when many women were “depressed, idle, and fully dependent on their husbands” (FO1L_I1) and seeking autonomy. The founder notes that they observed that in the food sector, “women had few opportunities compared to men and even the LGBTQ+ population” (FO1L_I1), prompting the creation of an inclusive space where all profits would support the community.

Another key motivator is actively contributing to solving local problems: “the main motivation was to be part of the problem we found in the neighborhood, but also to be part of the solution” (FO1L_I1), highlighting that every event organized by the enterprise contributes to the local mental health movement. This approach creates a direct connection between the enterprise and the social transformation of the community, attracting clients who value social impact.

Among the barriers faced, the stigma associated with the neighborhood stands out, as some clients prefer to hire catering services in wealthier areas, even if those do not generate social impact. As the founder points out: “sometimes people want to hire a catering service in an upscale area, even though we are a large social enterprise, but we are located in the periphery” (FO1L_I1). Additionally, the enterprise faces challenges related to formalization and bureaucracy, such as high taxes, and competition with larger companies that have better access to suppliers and capital. Adapting a female and LGBTQ+ workforce in a physically demanding sector also represents an operational challenge, given that the market traditionally favors male labor.

Overall, the social enterprise combines social purpose and financial sustainability, turning challenges into opportunities for impact, inclusion, and local empowerment, while maintaining the enterprise’s economic viability.

4.2.2 Case study FO2L: Weaving empowerment from waste

According to the founder (FO2L_I4), “the objective is the economic empowerment of these women, bringing more women to strengthen themselves while also contributing to the reduction of textile waste”. Located in the Mondubim neighborhood, one of the most populous areas of Fortaleza (Freitas; Costa, 2022), the social enterprise focuses on sustainable fashion, repurposing textile waste into functional items such as eco-bags and corporate gifts, while promoting environmental responsibility and social inclusion.

The founder’s motivation stems from both personal and community experiences. She explains: “From a young age, I was raised in a caring family, and my mother had this life purpose of helping people... This care was always present in my life” (FO2L_I4). Early exposure to work, responsibility, and caregiving shaped her understanding of social impact, which later merged with her passion for art and sustainability, leading her to create the enterprise in 2016.

Two major social concerns drove the initiative: textile waste in her community and the devaluation of peripheral women’s labor. As she recalls, “I saw so much waste on the streets, and it pained me... all this would pollute the environment” (FO2L_I4). By engaging women from vulnerable backgrounds, the enterprise educates them on environmental and social responsibility while empowering them economically.

Among the barriers faced, financial constraints and social perception were central. The founder notes: “At the beginning, people didn’t believe it would sell... the product was very much associated with waste” (FO2L_I4). Overcoming this required value construction, client education, and operational organization, common challenges for small social enterprises in Brazil.

Overall, the social enterprise combines social purpose, environmental sustainability, and economic viability, transforming challenges into opportunities for empowerment, awareness, and local impact.

4.2.3 Case study FO3H: A green bridge for conscious consumers

According to the founder (FO3H_I7), “our mission is to make it truly viable to live sustainably. My purpose with this social enterprise is to provide the means for consumers and sustainable businesses to thrive and compete on equal footing with larger players, at least locally”. The social enterprise is a digital platform and upcoming mobile application that

connects businesses and consumers focused on sustainability, offering products, services, events, and employment opportunities, a kind of “yellow pages” for sustainable living.

The motivation behind the social enterprise combines personal values and social responsibility. The founder explains: “As a Christian, I always have a motivation beyond the physical... it’s about leaving a meaningful legacy for future generations” (FO3H_I7). The platform was conceived to address the challenge of helping sustainable businesses find their audience and build a community, while also enabling consumers to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

Key drivers include facilitating connections, knowledge sharing, and community building within the sustainability sector. The founder emphasizes that many businesses fail in early stages because they cannot reach the right network: “If a business cannot connect with the right partners or clients, even a great product may fail” (FO3H_I7). By providing visibility, networking opportunities, and curated information, the social enterprise aims to strengthen both businesses and consumers engaged in sustainability.

Among the main barriers, the founder highlights technological and social challenges. Building a new platform from scratch, rather than using existing social media tools, required substantial effort: “It was a more difficult path to create the platform first, attract the community, and then grow together” (FO3H_I7). Additionally, convincing early-stage businesses and consumers to engage before the platform reached scale proved challenging, requiring strategic outreach, education, and value demonstration.

Overall, the social enterprise combines social purpose, environmental sustainability, and technological innovation, creating a network where sustainable businesses can thrive, consumers can make informed choices, and the broader community benefits from a connected, impactful ecosystem.

4.2.4 Case study FO4H: Turning trash into opportunity

The social enterprise was founded in 2016, emerging from the idea of the founder (FO4H_I10) and her partner to address the mismanagement of used cooking oil. As the founder explains, “the motivation was to transform a problem (waste) into opportunities for social, economic, and environmental impact” (FO4H_I10). Initially focused on collecting used oil from residential condominiums, the enterprise gradually expanded to include other recyclable materials and composting solutions, creating a comprehensive approach to circular economy practices.

The mission of the social enterprise is clear: “to drive the circular economy in Brazil. Taking care of oil was our entry point into the broader context of waste management and to promote this urgent concept” (FO4H_I10). Its goal is to transform societal and corporate attitudes toward waste, making companies and individuals active agents of change in sustainability practices.

Motivation stemmed from both necessity and vision. The founder recounts that the initiative initially arose from practical need: “Most Brazilians start businesses out of necessity to support their households, but our solution turned out to be highly relevant for society and the environment” (FO4H_I10). Over time, the mission itself became a driving force, reinforcing commitment to environmental impact and social responsibility.

The social enterprise faced multiple barriers, particularly the lack of existing support structures for social impact businesses at the time. The founder notes, “We had no networks, no established resources... everything was learned organically, through trial and error, facing many rejections” (FO4H_I10). Additionally, introducing innovative waste management solutions required creativity, persistence, and strong community engagement.

Overall, the social enterprise combines innovation, high social and environmental impact, and community engagement, emphasizing active participation and data-driven insights to create value for clients while educating and empowering society toward more sustainable behaviors.

4.2.5 Case study SP1L: Opening doors where they were closed

The social enterprise was founded in 2017 by a pedagogy graduate who had previously worked as a teacher and community leader. The initiative began as a local effort to support residents of Paraisópolis favela in finding employment and evolved into a broader social enterprise with a national scope. As the founder (SP1L_I13) explains, “our objective is to transform people’s lives through employability. Our mission is to offer qualified labor to large companies and provide opportunities for people” (SP1L_I13).

The motivation behind the social enterprise arose from both necessity and a desire for social impact. The founder recounts, “what motivated me most was seeing that I could support people and transform their lives through my work. When someone tells me, ‘I got a job thanks to you,’ it confirms that the purpose of our business is being fulfilled” (SP1L_I13). Her prior experience as a community leader and in educational programs provided the foundation for understanding local challenges and needs.

The enterprise targets a diverse audience, from young people aged 14 participating in apprenticeship programs to adults over 50 seeking employment opportunities. The founder emphasizes inclusivity and accessibility: “we don’t only work with young people or only with adults over 50. If a company needs someone with a specific profile, we identify the right candidate from our talent pool” (SP1L_I13). This flexible approach ensures that opportunities reach a wide range of beneficiaries who might otherwise face barriers to employment.

Barriers included establishing a sustainable structure and securing investment. The founder explains, “there is no good idea if it isn’t sustainable. I started very young and alone, and even today it’s a challenge to maintain the business. We need to show companies that we are a social enterprise, not an NGO, and that our service should be valued like any other business” (SP1L_I13). Overcoming these challenges required persistence, strategic planning, and building credibility with both clients and beneficiaries.

The social enterprise is considered innovative because it operates directly within underserved communities, connecting companies with skilled professionals who might otherwise be overlooked. The founder notes, “our differential is that we are embedded in the communities, bringing opportunities to talented individuals who face prejudice or lack of access, while providing companies with highly qualified candidates” (SP1L_I13). By combining social purpose, employability, and inclusivity, the enterprise creates measurable social impact while fostering sustainable workforce development.

4.2.6 Case study SP2M: Planting food, growing community

The social enterprise was founded in 2019 in the south zone of São Paulo, inspired by community activism and the desire to address local challenges related to access to healthy, organic food. The initial initiative was a delivery service connecting local producers from Jardim Ângela, a peripheral rural region, to residents in nearby neighborhoods. As one founder (SP2M_I16) explained, “we created a delivery to bring organic food to our community because it was going directly to elite neighborhoods and not to the periphery. For us, that felt unfair” (SP2M_I16).

Over time, the enterprise evolved from food delivery to establishing home gardens and composting initiatives. “We would create a garden for free, but only after people started composting their own organic waste. That way, they learned that their soil nourishes their plants” (SP2M_I16), the team recalled. This approach empowered residents to take part in

sustainable food production while cultivating a sense of ownership and responsibility toward their environment.

The mission of the social enterprise is to promote sustainable development from the periphery. “Our mission is to think about health, well-being, gender equality, and income generation, not just food production. We aim to replicate this model so that every periphery could have its own sustainable initiative” (SP2M_I16). The organization integrates social, educational, and environmental objectives, combining practical solutions with broader community development goals.

Barriers during creation included understanding the work as a social enterprise and navigating the language and concepts of the business sector. “The hardest part was realizing this was a business. For us, it was just reducing waste and helping our neighbors, not something that could generate revenue” (SP2M_I16). Partnerships with local organizations and strategic engagement with public and private sectors enabled the enterprise to formalize its activities and sustain operations.

The enterprise is considered innovative for its multiple impact pathways and adaptive use of resources. “Our composters were made from recycled water containers, and our model allows both revenue generation and community access. We provide workshops, therapeutic activities, and support local institutions, while also selling products and services to external clients” (SP2M_I16). By combining environmental stewardship, social inclusion, and income generation, the enterprise creates a replicable model for sustainable development in urban peripheries.

4.2.7 Case study SP3H: From waste to watts

The social enterprise was founded in 2018, inspired by the vision of creating sustainable solutions for waste management and energy generation. The initiative began with the installation of biodigesters in a sustainable burger restaurant in Vila Madalena, São Paulo. These biodigesters convert human and animal organic waste into biogas and fertilizer, enabling communities to access clean energy and improve sanitation. One of the founders (SP3H_I19) explained, “We wanted to provide dignity, health, and well-being for people in vulnerable areas by transforming waste into a resource” (SP3H_I19).

Over time, the enterprise expanded to serve households, public institutions, and private companies, integrating social and environmental objectives. The founder established an affiliated institute to implement social projects, ensuring that communities could benefit from

clean energy, proper sanitation, and educational programs. This approach combines practical solutions with broader social impact, creating a model that maximizes benefits for multiple stakeholders.

The mission of the social enterprise is to improve living conditions in vulnerable areas by promoting sustainable and inclusive waste management. “Our goal is to transform discarded organic material into energy and fertilizer, helping people cook safely, maintain hygiene, and access sanitation while reducing environmental impact” (SP3H_I19).

Barriers during creation included competing with cheaper or counterfeit equipment, educating clients about biodigester technology, and navigating regulatory and procurement challenges. “The biggest challenge was communicating how our biodigesters work and ensuring proper use, because the technology is different from traditional machines” (SP3H_I19). Strategic partnerships, continuous client education, and rigorous governance practices were critical to overcoming these challenges.

The enterprise is considered innovative for its scalable and autonomous technology, zero-energy operation, and multiple impact pathways. “Our biodigesters operate above ground without electricity, require minimal maintenance, and can be installed in remote areas. We generate income by providing services to public and private sectors while delivering social and environmental benefits to communities” (SP3H_I19). By combining technological innovation with social and environmental impact, the social enterprise creates a replicable model for sustainable development in diverse contexts.

4.2.8 Case study SP4H: *Crafting style from scraps*

The social enterprise was founded in 2018, emerging from a strong pre-defined concept and a deep understanding of social media dynamics. The founder described the early days: “We started with a model that was original, and quickly the audience began to engage. People wanted the products, but they didn’t care about the context. That’s when we realized the brand had a real potential” (SP4H_I22). The enterprise grew rapidly, leveraging scarcity and unique product identity, which encouraged fast-moving demand and built a highly engaged community.

The mission of the social enterprise is to combine creativity, social and political identity, and sustainable production practices. “Our mission is to be bold and different. We are integrating 3D printing to transform discarded materials into shoe components, giving new life to plastics and leftover textiles” (SP4H_I22). Beyond footwear, the enterprise repurposes materials from the production of insoles, fabrics, and packaging to minimize waste, offering

products in eco-friendly bags instead of boxes. The enterprise also includes lines for children and the LGBTQIA+ community, reflecting an inclusive and socially conscious philosophy.

Motivations behind the social enterprise included creating a product that tells a story and connects with people on a cultural and social level, while exploring sustainable production. Barriers included managing rapid growth, educating consumers on the enterprise's unique processes, and ensuring production timelines respected the artisanal nature of the products. "People are used to instant results, but our model is about carefully curated production and meaningful engagement" (SP4H_I22).

The social enterprise is considered innovative for its integration of sustainability, design, and social identity into a market-driven model. By transforming discarded materials into high-quality footwear and promoting a message of inclusivity and political engagement, it demonstrates a replicable approach to combining creativity, environmental stewardship, and community values in contemporary social enterprises.

Table 8 presents the motivating factors and barriers for each of the cases.

Table 8. Summary of identified motivators and barriers

Case	Motivators	Barriers
FO1L	a) creating opportunities and income for women and the LGBTQ+ population; b) contributing to solve social problems in the neighborhood; c) reinvesting profits in mental health; d) transforming events into visible social action.	a) stigma of peripheral territory; b) customer preference for companies in upscale areas; c) high tax burden and bureaucracy; d) competition with larger players; e) heavy physical effort in a historically male-dominated sector.
FO2L	a) economic empowerment of marginalized women; b) Reducing textile waste; c) Personal commitment to environmental care; d) Uniting art and sustainability.	a) initial market skepticism; b) need to educate clients about sustainable value; c) lack of financial resources; d) difficult initial structuring.
FO3H	a) making sustainable consumption viable; b) legacy beyond the physical; c) strengthening the local sustainable ecosystem; d) connecting sustainable businesses with the public and partners.	a) technological development; b) difficulty engaging users before achieving scale; c) need to educate the market on network logic.
FO4H	a) transforming waste into social/economic/environmental impact; b) promoting a circular economy; c) transforming need into a relevant solution.	a) lack of networks and resources; b) empirical learning; c) initial rejections; d) innovation requiring constant creativity.
SP1L	a) transforming lives through employability; b) purpose validated when someone gets a job; c) inclusive action regardless of age.	a) building financial sustainability; b) explaining to companies that it's a business and not an NGO; c) young and lacking initial support; d) difficulty attracting investment.
SP2M	a) bringing organic food to the outskirts of the city; b) empowering through composting and vegetable gardens; c) promoting health, well-being, gender equality and income; d) replicating a sustainable model in the outskirts of the city.	a) initial understanding that it was a business; b) inaccessible language about social enterprises; c) need for partnerships to formalize sustainability.

SP3H	a) transforming organic waste into energy and dignity; b) generating health, sanitation, and clean energy; c) scalable and accessible technology.	a) competition with counterfeit/cheaper equipment; b) customer education; c) regulatory challenges and public procurement.
SP4H	a) creating products with history, identity, and cultural engagement; b) sustainability through 3D printing and material reuse; c) a community engaged by design and political aesthetics.	a) managing rapid growth; b) educating the market for artisanal production rhythms; c) expectation of immediate consumption.

Source: Author' own creation (2026).

The findings in Table 8 reveal that the predominant motivators among the cases are transformative purpose and redress of inequalities. In practically all cases, the business did not originate from a market opportunity, but from a perceived social pain in the territory (be it the exclusion of women and LGBTQIA+ people, environmental injustice, or the lack of circulation of sustainable goods in the peripheries). Entrepreneurship appears as a tool to rebalance the game: a way to redistribute value in the territory, to break down asymmetries, to generate autonomy and dignity. Profit is instrumental, not final. The business model is a mechanism for enabling impact, not the ultimate object of desire.

At the same time, the most frequent obstacles are not technical, but cognitive and institutional: the market does not know how to classify, price, or recognize as a "valuable product" that which originates as impact. This manifests itself in different ways (initial disbelief, "product associated with waste," questioning whether it's an NGO or a business, preference for mainstream players, skepticism until social proof occurs), but the root is the same: there is a tension between "impact as a public good" and "impact as a monetizable private good." These cases need to educate their clients, stakeholders, and networks to successfully legitimize the economic value of the impact they produce.

4.3 How Do Formal Institutional Voids Act In The Development Of Social Enterprises?

Formal institutional voids refer to gaps in regulations, infrastructure, and public policies that shape access to markets, resources, and opportunities (North, 1991). In contexts where formal institutions fail to provide adequate support for marginalized communities, social enterprises must navigate structural deficiencies while simultaneously addressing social and economic exclusion. Understanding how these formal voids affect organizational strategy, operations, and impact is central to evaluating the role of social enterprises in promoting inclusion, sustainability, and local development.

One of the formal institutional voids most cited by the social enterprises analyzed was an inadequate legal framework, which hinders the formal recognition of these organizations, limits access to tax incentives, and creates uncertainty regarding their legal status and fundraising methods. This issue was especially recurrent among enterprises located in high-HDI areas. Social enterprises located in regions with low Human Development Index levels report that excessive taxation significantly reduces the resources available for social reinvestment: “The tax burden is extremely high and unviable for us, especially because we are a social enterprise” (FO1L_I2). Due to their smaller size and limited resource capacity, these enterprises often face restricted access to funding opportunities, as they struggle to compete in the same public calls and grant programs as larger, more traditional companies. As one participant noted, “I think these current laws could be a little more flexible for companies like ours, which are small businesses operating within the community. Many do not understand these laws or are unable to apply for government funding because of the strict requirements” (SP1L_I14).

Social enterprises operating in more affluent areas also report challenges stemming from an inadequate legal framework. These organizations are neither NGOs nor traditional companies, yet they are subject to the same legislation as conventional businesses: “I believe that it is really seen as a common company; it pays taxes like any other company” (FO3H_I8). This perception is reinforced by another respondent who emphasized the lack of regulatory clarity: “The clearer the laws and requirements for a company to operate, the easier it is for everyone. We're a company like any other; we're not an NGO, and we don't work directly with the government” (FO3H_I7). As another respondent highlighted, “Despite significant advances in Brazilian legislation, there are still few practical incentives” (FO4H_I11). Similarly, a manager of a social enterprise in São Paulo pointed out the absence of institutional recognition through tax incentives for companies with a social mission: “I actually feel a lack of benefits from having a social mission” (SP3H_I20). Without clear legal recognition or supportive fiscal mechanisms, social enterprises remain trapped between the logic of the market and the limitations of the nonprofit sector, which undermines their potential to drive inclusive and lasting development.

The inefficiency of public policies is another factor affecting business performance in Fortaleza and São Paulo. This void was most frequently reported by social enterprises in low-HDI territories. Businesses located in peripheral neighborhoods highlight the absence of policy frameworks designed for social enterprises: “We don't have public policies that support us in this matter of transforming lives” (FO2L_I4). Similarly, one business owner emphasized the

lack of tailored local policies: “I think that the lack of public policies in the favelas can directly affect business” (SP1L_I15). Interviewees also pointed to the weak engagement of development agencies in peripheral territories: “This development department [of Fortaleza City Hall] should be more involved in the peripheral territories” (FO2L_I4). Another manager acknowledged the inefficiency of public policies and argued that the government should at least avoid hindering these initiatives: “The government has a role in not interfering with them” (SP3H_I20). Therefore, the absence of effective and inclusive public policies limits the ability of social enterprises to access resources, build partnerships, and expand their social impact.

Social enterprises also report another formal institutional void: the weakened educational system. This void was more evident among companies based in peripheral territories, largely due to disparities in literacy and access to quality education compared to upscale areas. The owner of social enterprise FO2L highlighted the limited access to financial education in vulnerable communities: “Dealing with financial matters is something I've never known, something we have to learn the hard way” (FO2L_I5).

Another enterprise pointed out the lack of vocational training and entrepreneurial education in schools: “Young people who leave high school do so without any skills, no technical knowledge for their first job, and they feel lost” (SP1L_I13). Similarly, one respondent emphasized the absence of institutional support to promote the professional qualification of social entrepreneurs: “Regarding government support, I'm not just talking about financial support, but also about qualifications and information” (SP2M_I17).

Even in more affluent areas, the owner of a social enterprise reported limited access to entrepreneurial education: “It's not just about having an incubation or acceleration program, but about teaching entrepreneurship. It's very difficult. We don't have this culture, perhaps as Brazilians, and we also don't learn this in college” (FO3H_I7). This highlights that the deficiency in entrepreneurial education is a systemic issue, transcending socioeconomic boundaries and reflecting a broader institutional gap that affects the development of social enterprises across different contexts. The lack of adequate educational infrastructure and entrepreneurial training weakens the human capital essential for the growth of social enterprises. Without access to financial literacy, technical skills, and institutional learning opportunities, these businesses struggle to develop effective management practices, attract investments, and scale their social impact.

This structural deficiency is also reflected in the personal trajectories of social entrepreneurs. As one respondent explained, “We come from a family background where we were raised, we don't know how to handle money, dealing with financial matters is something

I've never known, something we have to learn the hard way. Then a crisis happens, as we're already seeing, right? This impact happens directly.” (FO2L_I4). This statement reveals how the absence of financial education is not merely an individual shortcoming, but a socially reproduced condition that amplifies vulnerability during periods of economic instability, further constraining the sustainability of social enterprises.

This interpretation is reinforced by documentary evidence from a company report (Company D Report, 2024), which indicates that its initiatives include promoting sustainable entrepreneurial education for firms, recognizing this as an ongoing challenge within the Brazilian sector, while simultaneously generating measurable socio-environmental impact through the productive inclusion of waste pickers, the strengthening of local circular economy systems, and the regeneration of urban and rural ecosystems, all supported by clear impact metrics and alignment with ESG best practices.

Another formal institutional void highlighted by the social enterprises was excessive bureaucracy. Those located in peripheral territories perceive bureaucratic processes as regulatory barriers that restrict the inclusion of small businesses in the market, hinder the development of partnerships, and increase operational uncertainty. As participants explained, “The rules are all so bureaucratic that we can't close a partnership” (SP1L_I13), “The government can't ask for the same documentation from a small company as from a large, 50-year-old company” (SP1L_I13), and “We're left trying to navigate this ocean of uncertainty that is currently here” (SP2M_I17). The excessive bureaucratic demands discourage formalization, delay access to public or private funding opportunities, and ultimately constrain the growth and sustainability of social enterprises, particularly those operating in vulnerable communities.

Social enterprises located in high-HDI areas also recognize that excessive bureaucracy consumes significant time and resources during the business formalization process. As one respondent noted, “This is one criticism I have of the system: creating a brand and owning it shouldn't be so time-consuming and difficult” (FO3H_I7). Another entrepreneur shared a similar experience: “I faced excessive bureaucracy because, when I established my business model, I operated with a logistics service that was performed by me” (FO4H_I10). These accounts reveal that bureaucratic inefficiencies not only delay business operations but also discourage innovation and formalization, even among enterprises with greater access to resources and higher levels of education.

National economic instability also directly impacts the performance of social enterprises in both affluent and peripheral territories. As one entrepreneur explained, “Instability in the

economic environment affects our costs directly” (FO1L_I1). Rising prices influence consumer behavior, leading clients to favor holding events at home rather than hiring companies to organize them. Economic challenges also affect the demand for environmentally sustainable products and services: “Where people are in a better financial situation, they could certainly choose, 'I'll pay a little more, but I'll get a product that's less damaging to the planet, right?’” (SP3H_I20). These dynamics demonstrate that economic volatility not only increases operational costs but also constrains consumer willingness to support socially and environmentally responsible enterprises, thereby limiting the growth and impact of social businesses across different socioeconomic contexts.

This perception is consistent with documentary evidence from a company report (Company A Report, 2024), which states that, in consideration of the ecological footprint its buffet services leave on the planet, the organization has decided not to use disposable plastic materials in its events and services, as self-sustainability is understood to be a guiding operational principle. These dynamics demonstrate that economic volatility not only increases operational costs but also constrains consumer willingness to support socially and environmentally responsible enterprises, thereby limiting the growth and impact of social businesses across different socioeconomic contexts.

4.4 How Do Informal Institutional Voids Act in the Development of Social Enterprises?

Informal institutional voids, that is, gaps in cultural norms, social expectations, practices, and values (North, 1991), play a crucial role in shaping the development and operational strategies of social enterprises. Unlike formal voids, which involve tangible regulatory, infrastructural, or market deficiencies, informal voids are embedded in the social fabric, manifesting as discrimination, social stigmatization, lack of trust, and limited awareness of sustainability or inclusion in social enterprises in Fortaleza and São Paulo.

One of the informal institutional voids most evident in the analyses is social and cultural exclusion. This void encompasses the stigmatization of neighborhoods and the marginalization of groups living in peripheral areas and was most frequently reported by companies operating in low-HDI areas in Fortaleza. As one participant explained, “The challenge is the stigma of the neighborhood. Sometimes people will hire a buffet; they want the buffet in the upscale area” (FO1L_I1). Others added, “People have completely misconceptions about us” (FO1L_I2) and “People always associate my product with trash” (FO2L_I4). Social enterprises in the outskirts of São Paulo reported similar experiences: “We’ve actually had this discrimination against our

candidates based on appearance” (SP1L_I14), “Don’t mess with her, because she’s from Paraisópolis [a peripheral neighborhood]” (SP1L_I15), and “So I couldn’t see myself in anyone; we [who came from the favela] have been discredited our entire lives” (SP2M_I18).

These experiences of social and cultural exclusion affect the legitimacy and reputation of social enterprises, reducing customer trust, limiting opportunities for partnerships, and constraining access to markets. Consequently, the stigma associated with peripheral neighborhoods not only hinders the growth of these businesses but also reinforces cycles of marginalization, making it more difficult for social enterprises to achieve their social and economic objectives.

Social and cultural exclusion was cited even by a social enterprise operating in a high-HDI area, but in this case, it related to social stereotypes surrounding alternative business models. As one owner explained, “Brazil is very prejudiced against this [social enterprise managers]. People think that if a manager isn't wearing a suit, they probably shouldn't be respected. I find that a bit ridiculous” (SP4H_I22). From the business owner's perspective, this perception may undermine the credibility and professional recognition of social enterprises, limiting their ability to build trust with clients, partners, and investors. Even in affluent contexts, such stereotypes create subtle barriers that can restrict growth and hinder the wider acceptance of innovative business models that prioritize social impact over conventional corporate appearances.

The lack of political representation is another informal institutional void highlighted in the analyses, affecting social enterprises across different contexts. As social enterprise FO2L noted, “We needed to reach them [politicians] because generally they don’t see the problems in the outskirts” (FO2L_I15). This lack of representation illustrates the distance between policymakers and the realities of marginalized communities, which affects the ability of social enterprises to influence regulations, access support programs, and advocate for initiatives that address local needs.

At the same time, enterprises located in high-HDI areas also report challenges related to political engagement. One company stated, “We don’t have a public administration that truly disseminates, promotes, and encourages the consumption of environmental products and services” (FO3H_I9). Company G emphasized difficulties in including renewable energy issues on the public policy agenda: “We fight to have public policy, not only for ourselves, but for any social impact project, for any renewable energy” (SP3H_I19), adding, “There’s no effective communication between the government and these social enterprises” (SP3H_I21). Another respondent pointed out the general lack of political engagement with social enterprises:

“Government and state initiatives for social programs that benefit these entrepreneurs. To be honest, I’ve never heard of them” (SP4H_I24).

The absence of meaningful political representation limits social enterprises’ capacity to influence policy, secure resources, and expand their social impact. Without mechanisms to engage with policymakers, both peripheral and high-HDI enterprises face barriers that reduce their visibility, hinder innovation, and constrain the development of initiatives that could address pressing social and environmental challenges.

Corruption was cited by two social enterprises located in upscale areas, one in Fortaleza and the other in São Paulo. As one respondent stated, “Within the Brazilian market, in any state, there's corruption and a very difficult-to-break structure within the country's waste system” (FO4H_I10), while another explained, “Within the government, corruption is still very prevalent here in Brazil. Corruption goes beyond the limits of our desire for prosperity.” Thus, corruption as an informal institutional void can hinder the development and scalability of social enterprises by creating an uneven playing field, increasing operational risks, and limiting access to public resources and partnerships. The prevalence of corrupt practices undermines trust in institutions, discourages investment, and diverts attention and resources away from socially impactful initiatives, ultimately constraining the ability of social enterprises to achieve their mission and generate meaningful social change.

Another informal institutional void identified that affects the development of social enterprises in upscale areas is social resistance. According to the owner of company SP4H, “From the moment we put something out, some post defending a value, whether it was about LGBT or left-wing issues, we felt a backlash from people who said they liked [the brand] but wouldn’t buy it anymore. There was minimal retaliation” (SP4H_I22). Companies that engage in social advocacy may face reputational risks and consumer pushback, which can limit their market reach and reduce financial sustainability. This resistance creates a challenging environment for enterprises that seek to integrate social or political values into their business models, forcing them to navigate conflicting expectations between maintaining social impact and sustaining customer loyalty.

4.5 How Do Social Enterprises Mitigate Institutional Formal and Informal Voids?

4.5.1 Mitigating formal institutional voids

The research findings indicate that social enterprises contribute to mitigating formal institutional voids by generating employment, strengthening local economies, promoting responsible production, facilitating the development of supportive ecosystems, acting as market intermediaries, and reducing infrastructure-related barriers.

Job creation and economic autonomy was frequently emphasized by companies operating in areas with low HDI. The owner of Company FO1L reported that, through the social enterprise, it was possible to offer better working conditions for women who had previously depended on their husbands' incomes: "This ends up being a great opportunity for them, as they previously depended on their husbands' salaries, and it brings benefits to mothers, housewives, and entrepreneurs by giving them a sense of usefulness" (FO1L_I2). Similarly, a client of Company FO2L observed that the social enterprise contributes to reducing unemployment among women in the community: "It will provide employment, being located in a peripheral area. So unemployed women who return to work are beneficiaries" (FO2L_I6).

The owner of Social Enterprise SP1L also highlighted that her business expands access to employment opportunities in low-income areas: "We are located in the favelas, where opportunities sometimes don't reach. By being within the community, we can bring opportunities" (SP1L_I13), adding that "we already employ over 3,700 people" (SP1L_I13). In turn, social enterprise SP4H claims that it creates opportunities for marginalized groups often excluded from formal markets: "When we create campaigns, we always strive to find models, photographers, or professionals who represent minorities and contribute to this impact. People need to feel represented, right?" (SP4H_I23).

The social enterprises analyzed also contribute to strengthening the local economy by generating income for community members and by prioritizing local suppliers. Social Enterprise A, which sources all its supplies from within the community, reported: "Last year, we had \$65,000 in sales. That's still a small amount, right? But selling \$65,000 in a social enterprise in a peripheral neighborhood, almost \$30,000 circulated within our neighborhood, going directly into people's accounts" (FO1L_I1). Similarly, Company SP2M emphasized that its activities go beyond food production to promote broader community well-being: "It's not just about producing food; it's about thinking about health and well-being, and about generating income for the community" (SP2M_I16). Even enterprises operating in areas with higher HDI reported positive economic effects. For instance, Social Enterprise FO3H stated that its platform enhances the continuity of social businesses: "I think we've managed to reduce the mortality rate of sustainable businesses" (FO3H_I7). Likewise, Social Enterprise SP3H contributes to the local economy through circular energy solutions: "There is a real economic impact on the

community, you know? A person who lives in a community, in a favela, and the company delivers gas [produced from waste] to them; this gas would normally cost \$120 for a cylinder, and they no longer have that monthly expense” (SP3H_I20).

This pattern is further reinforced by documentary evidence indicating that technological solutions implemented by social enterprises can generate direct economic benefits alongside social and environmental gains. A company report describes initiatives in which biodigester systems convert organic waste into usable resources, such as renewable energy and natural biofertilizer, reducing household expenditures and supporting local food production. By lowering input costs, improving agricultural productivity, and decreasing dependence on external supply chains, such interventions stimulate local economic circulation while simultaneously strengthening community resilience (Company G Report, 2025). These findings suggest that the economic contributions of social enterprises are not limited to job creation or income generation, but also include cost reduction, resource efficiency, and the activation of localized circular economies that enhance territorial development.

Furthermore, through responsible production, social enterprises help mitigate formal institutional voids stemming from the inefficiency of public policies. As noted by a client of Social Enterprise FO1L, such initiatives promote environmental responsibility throughout the production chain: “Avoiding disposable plastic, taking care with packaging, presentation, and everything else. So I think it’s a business that can track the entire production chain and ensure that the negative impact is minimized” (FO1L_I3). Similarly, Social Enterprise FO2L highlights the reuse of materials that would otherwise become waste: “Materials that would otherwise become trash and would take a long time to break down in nature” (FO2L_I5).

This pattern is corroborated by documentary evidence from another enterprise report (Company G Report, 2025), which describes the installation of a biodigester at an eco-resort located in the Brazilian Amazon as part of the launch of new accommodation units. The document emphasizes that the initiative demonstrates how sustainable technologies can be integrated into tourism projects, transforming contact with nature into an educational and environmentally conscious experience, while also reinforcing responsible production practices within social enterprises. Such evidence further illustrates how sustainability-oriented innovation operates as a strategic response to institutional deficiencies, enabling organizations to advance environmental education and impact even in contexts where formal policy support remains limited.

Social Enterprise FO4H reinforces this perspective by emphasizing its role in advancing environmental policy implementation: “The closure of landfills has been planned since 2010.

We're already in 2025, and we still have over 3,000 open-air dumps in Brazil. We're pushing forward the agenda for their closure" (FO4H_I10). Responsible production also contributes to reducing environmental externalities within the institutional environment, as explained by Social Enterprise SP3H: "Our clients want to treat waste locally so it doesn't have to go to landfills, reducing costs with cold storage and collection, and ensuring proper disposal, preventing the release of harmful gases into the atmosphere" (SP3H_I20).

Besides that, the results revealed that social enterprises located in areas with high HDI help to mitigate formal voids by facilitating the construction of ecosystems, serving as market intermediaries, and reducing institutional barriers.

Regarding the construction of an ecosystem, since public policies are inefficient for this purpose, Social Enterprise C states that: "There we simply have a connection through the platform, and it allows companies that have this ecological and even sustainable interest to work together, even if on different fronts" (FO3H_I8). This strengthens collaborative networks among social enterprises, fostering knowledge exchange, collective action, and mutual support in promoting sustainable development practices within contexts where institutional mechanisms for coordination are weak or absent.

Social Enterprise FO3H also plays a market intermediation role, addressing the informal and exclusionary nature of the social business market in Brazil. It helps reduce informational gaps and increases the visibility of environmentally responsible products and services. As noted by one of its representatives, "The owner had the idea of creating the platform due to the lack, in fact, of a cataloged market for sustainable things" (FO3H_I8). Similarly, Company FO4H facilitates social connections and improves access to waste picker networks. According to one of its clients, "The company plays a fundamental social role and contributes directly to the community. They introduced us to the waste pickers' association, for example, which we didn't have access to before. We learned about donating our electronic waste for sustainable collection through the company" (FO4H_I12).

In turn, Social Enterprise SP3H helps mitigate infrastructure deficiencies in Brazil by installing biotoilets in regions lacking access to basic sanitation. In addition, it provides electricity to traditional communities through sustainable energy solutions. As explained by the company's owner and a client, "Traditional sanitation won't reach remote locations; it's very expensive, so we're much cheaper" (SP3H_I19), and "It is innovative because the production of gas from human waste does not involve bureaucratic installation; it is adaptable to regions where we do not have, for example, electricity to power the installation" (SP3H_I21).

This evidence is further reinforced by documentary data from the company, which reports the implementation of a biodigester system at the Surucucu Indigenous Health Reference Center, located in the Yanomami Indigenous Territory in Alto Alegre (Roraima). According to the report, the technology enables the local production of renewable energy through the conversion of organic waste into biogas, generating up to seven hours of daily fuel for cooking and replacing conventional gas sources whose transportation costs to the region can exceed R\$900. The system also produces up to 600 liters of biofertilizer per day, supporting regenerative agricultural practices and strengthening local food security. Beyond economic and environmental benefits, the initiative is described as fostering circular economy practices and enhancing community autonomy in the sustainable management of resources (Company G Report, 2025). This case illustrates how context-adapted technological solutions can address infrastructure gaps, reduce logistical constraints, and promote long-term social and environmental resilience in underserved territories.

4.5.2 *Mitigating informal institutional voids*

The research results indicate that social enterprises contribute to alleviating informal institutional voids by facilitating social inclusion, helping to reduce racial prejudice, and increasing the environmental awareness of those involved in their operations.

One of the positive impacts generated by social enterprises is the promotion of social inclusion through the empowerment of marginalized groups, personal transformation, the advancement of dignity and decent work, and engagement with minority communities. As the owner of Social Enterprise FO1L explains: “The buffet is made up only of women and the LGBT population, right? Even people joke that it’s prejudice against white straight men, but it’s not, because we have to give opportunities to those who don’t have them” (SP1L_I13). Similarly, a client of Company F highlights that such initiatives enable the production of high-quality food even in marginalized territories: “This positive impact demonstrates that we too produce, that we can grow our own quality food, even in marginalized territories, often seen as places where nothing grows. There, we see incredibly high-quality produce that simultaneously nourishes and educates” (SP2M_I18).

Moreover, Social Enterprise SP4H notes that, while engagement with minority groups may not be its central focus, it is an embraced value embedded in its practices and operational model: “Minority inclusion, even in its models and other aspects, isn’t its core focus, but it’s something it embraces” (SP4H_I24). Collectively, these examples illustrate how social

enterprises contribute to the empowerment and inclusion of groups historically excluded from economic and social opportunities.

This interpretation is further supported by documentary evidence from a company report, which highlights that many residents lack access to computers, internet connectivity, or even basic digital literacy skills required to use such tools (Company E Report, 2025). This structural limitation underscores how digital exclusion operates as an additional institutional barrier affecting marginalized populations and reinforces the importance of initiatives led by social enterprises to expand technological access and capacity-building opportunities. By addressing these constraints, such organizations not only foster inclusion but also help reduce structural inequalities that restrict participation in contemporary economic and social systems.

In addition to fostering social inclusion, social enterprises contribute to reducing racial prejudice in companies located in peripheral areas of Fortaleza and São Paulo. For instance, Social Enterprise FO2L reported that one of its employees, a Black woman, initially produced only white, blonde dolls. After several conversations, the owner encouraged her to also create Black dolls, which became a major commercial success within the community. This initiative not only improved sales but also had a powerful social impact, as children began to see themselves represented in the dolls. As the owner explained, “One of the seamstresses only made blonde dolls, but after a conversation, she started making Black dolls, and they’re beautiful. But she didn’t identify as a Black woman, and you can see how social factors are at play—things from childhood that people carry with them” (FO2L_I4).

Similarly, Social Enterprise SP1L highlighted the persistent challenge of overcoming racial prejudice in Brazil to promote equitable access to formal markets: “We have a very serious situation, with prejudice against people who live in communities. We know that prejudice against Black people still exists, so our main focus is to break down these barriers between the candidate and the company” (SP1L_I14). In turn, Company SP4H also reinforces inclusion by featuring marginalized groups in its marketing campaigns. As one of its representatives explained, “Our bodies, the company’s models; we’ve always worked with Black models” (SP4H_I22). Through these actions, social enterprises not only promote diversity and inclusion but also help reshape informal institutions by questioning social stereotypes and redefining community values.

Finally, environmental awareness represents another positive impact promoted by the social enterprises analyzed, contributing to the mitigation of informal institutional voids related to environmental behavior and collective responsibility. Social Enterprise FO4H, for example, fosters behavioral change and enhances social recognition among waste collectors: “I work to

change people's mindsets and behaviors regarding the separation and reuse of waste, as well as to increase recognition of the work of recyclable material collectors" (FO4H_I10). Similarly, the owner of Social Enterprise FO3H highlights that their organization promotes environmental education indirectly by offering sustainable products and services: "Indirectly, we are working on environmental education, promoting these different sustainable products and services [through the platform], expanding horizons and creating a deeper collective awareness about sustainability" (FO3H_I7). Social Enterprise SP2M also broadens access to agroecological knowledge and environmental education within the community: "There's also an impact on people's access to these agroecological practices. Many don't have a place to learn about agroecology or environmental education in practice, and here they have that access" (SP2M_I16).

Together, these initiatives illustrate how social enterprises can act as catalysts for cultural transformation, mitigating informal institutional voids by reshaping values, norms, and behaviors associated with environmental care. By encouraging sustainable practices and promoting collective awareness, they contribute to the gradual consolidation of environmental responsibility as a shared social norm within their communities.

5 DISCUSSION AND THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This section interprets the results through the lens of the theoretical framework and highlights their theoretical and practical implications.

5.1 Discussion Of Research Propositions

The research results indicate that formal institutional voids hinder the development of social enterprises, thus confirming Research Proposition 1. Specifically, it was found that inadequate legal frameworks, inefficient public policies, a weak education system, excessive bureaucracy, and economic instability restrict their growth. Among social enterprises operating in marginalized neighborhoods, the most relevant formal institutional voids are inadequate legal frameworks, inefficient public policies, and a weak education system. In contrast, for those located in high HDI areas, the most influential voids are inadequate legal frameworks and excessive bureaucracy.

These findings are in line with the study by Mair, Martí, and Ventresca (2012), which argues that formal institutions play a fundamental role in structuring the environment in which social enterprises operate, as they establish the legal and regulatory frameworks that enable or constrain organizational action. When such formal institutions, such as laws, public policies, and governance systems, are weak or absent, social enterprises face significant barriers to legitimization, access to funding, and integration into formal markets (Mair & Rathert, 2025). This situation limits their capacity to scale operations and to sustain social impact over time (Lashitew; Van Tulder; Muche, 2022a).

Fun and Yan (2025) analyzed the field of social enterprises in China and concluded that the Chinese government has not yet officially engaged in defining or institutionally framing the term "social enterprise." There is no formal recognition or official guidelines that distinguish social enterprises from non-profit organizations or traditional businesses in China (Fun & Yan, 2024). This result is similar to that observed in Brazil. In the analyzed context, social enterprises also face a legal and political vacuum, as there is no consolidated legal definition of what constitutes a "social enterprise." This lack of official framing leads the State to treat them sometimes as NGOs, subject to the rules of the third sector, and sometimes as conventional companies, subject to the same taxation and regulation as purely for-profit businesses.

The results of this study are consistent with research conducted in other contexts of the Global South, which also highlight the lack of professional training focused on social

entrepreneurship. Sydow et al. (2022), investigating social enterprises in Kenya, observed that social entrepreneurs lack specific training to manage their businesses, since the country's education system does not include content on entrepreneurship nor offer technical support for the development of these skills. Similarly, Shepherd, Parida and Wincent (2021) in India highlight that so-called "slum entrepreneurs" generally lack adequate educational training, which limits their management and innovation capabilities. Consistent with these findings, this study identified that, in the Brazilian context, the education system also does not prepare individuals to be entrepreneurs. The interviews revealed that most entrepreneurs learned autodidactically or through practical experiences, without institutional support or formal training in social management or entrepreneurial innovation.

A similar situation is observed in European countries in transition, such as the Czech Republic, where it is also difficult to find training programs specifically aimed at social entrepreneurship. Even when these initiatives exist, they tend to treat social enterprises on an equal footing with traditional businesses, based on the principle that both should have the same opportunities for access to support and funding, without recognizing the particularities and hybrid challenges of the social enterprise model (Pelucha; Kourilova; Kveton, 2017).

Excessive bureaucracy is another limiting factor for the development of social enterprises in Brazil. Organizations face significant difficulties in starting a business, raising capital, and complying with the high number of administrative and fiscal regulations, which consumes time and resources that could be directed towards core activities. Similarly, excessive bureaucracy also represents a significant obstacle for social enterprises in Poland, especially regarding the use and management of public and private resources (Mikołajczak, 2022). The author observes that complex administrative requirements hinder access to funding, generating operational inefficiencies and contributing to employee and volunteer turnover, given the unstable organizational environment.

The country's economic instability is another aspect that limits the performance of social enterprises. This is because these organizations mostly work with populations in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability, whose financial conditions are strongly impacted by periods of recession, high inflation, or reduced consumption. In crisis contexts, the demand for paid products and services tends to decrease, while the need for social actions increases, creating pressure on social enterprises, which need to maintain their social impact even with reduced revenue.

Regarding Research Proposition 2, our findings confirm that informal institutional voids also hinder the development of social enterprises. Specifically, social and cultural exclusion,

lack of political representation, corruption, and social resistance to change were identified as key constraints affecting their growth and performance. Among social enterprises operating in peripheral neighborhoods, the most prominent informal institutional voids are social and cultural exclusion, along with limited political representation. In contrast, social enterprises located in wealthier neighborhoods are most affected by a lack of political representation, corruption, and social resistance to change.

The results related to Research Proposition 2 reinforce the idea that informal institutional voids exert a significant influence on the development of social enterprises. As Mair and Martí (2009) and Webb et al. (2020) point out, these voids are related to the absence or fragility of social norms, shared values, and networks of trust that guide interactions between economic and political actors. In contexts marked by social and cultural exclusion, corruption, and low political representation, social enterprises face difficulties in building legitimacy, establishing partnerships, and mobilizing local resources.

Social and cultural exclusion constitutes an informal institutional void that limits the ability of social enterprises to operate and consolidate. This occurs because these organizations often emerge from historically marginalized communities, facing stigmas, prejudices, and structural barriers associated with race, social class, gender, or territorial origin. In the Brazilian context, for example, structural racism and social inequality hinder these initiatives' access to support networks, investments, and institutional recognition, since social entrepreneurs from peripheral or racialized groups are often underestimated or made invisible in the innovation and impact investing ecosystem. Thus, even when they have relevant solutions to social problems, they encounter symbolic and cultural resistance to legitimizing their initiatives before public and private actors.

A similar situation is observed in other contexts, such as in India, where marginalized caste groups have historically been excluded from access to knowledge and entrepreneurial opportunities. This exclusion reproduces a cycle of inequality that restricts the development of human and social capital in grassroots communities (Qureshi *et al.*, 2023b). Colovic and Schruoffeneger (2022) found that stigmatization is a significant challenge for social enterprises operating in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), where thousands of residents live in precarious conditions, often in informal settlements lacking basic sanitation. These communities face multiple social and economic hardships and are frequently marginalized and stigmatized by the wider society.

The lack of political representation also constitutes an informal institutional void that affects the functioning and influence of social enterprises. This absence of political voice limits

their ability to advocate for supportive policies, access public resources, and participate in decision-making processes that directly affect their operations and beneficiaries. The study by (Kleinhans; Bailey; Lindbergh, 2019), which analyzed nine case studies across England, the Netherlands, and Sweden, found that many social enterprises identified this issue as a major barrier. According to the authors, this challenge arises because social enterprises are often not perceived as representative of, nor democratically accountable to, the broader population, which weakens their legitimacy in the eyes of policymakers. As a result, even when they contribute significantly to addressing social problems, their voices tend to be overlooked in policy arenas, reinforcing their marginal position within institutional structures.

Furthermore, corruption constitutes another informal institutional void that constrains the activities of social enterprises. In contexts where institutional voids exist, organizations often face the need to rely on bribery, informal networks, or personal connections (e.g., political or family ties) to access resources and opportunities (Fu; Yan, 2024). This challenge is exacerbated by weak or biased legal and administrative systems. For instance, Mair and Martí (2009) highlight how male domination and corruption within judicial institutions can render legal protections ineffective in Bangladesh, particularly for women, undermining efforts to ensure fairness and accountability. Consequently, corruption not only hinders the operational efficiency of social enterprises but also limits their capacity to serve vulnerable communities and achieve social impact.

Another factor associated with informal institutional gaps is social resistance to consuming products and services from social enterprises. In many contexts, part of the population distrusts the quality, legitimacy, or sustainability of these initiatives, especially when they work with marginalized groups or originate in low-income communities. This cultural and symbolic resistance limits the ability of social enterprises to expand their markets and generate stable revenues, compromising their long-term sustainability. However, resistance should not be seen only as a negative phenomenon. The culture in which entrepreneurs are embedded also influences the circulation of tacit knowledge and can stimulate the creation of social value and innovation. Thus, the resistance of different actors (internal and external) can serve as a stimulus for questioning established practices, helping to avoid deviations from the mission, inefficient use of resources, or ethically inappropriate initiatives (Newth; Woods, 2014).

The data reveal that social enterprises generate positive impacts in mitigating both formal and informal institutional voids, confirming the Research Proposition 3. Concerning formal institutional voids, social enterprises operating in peripheral neighborhoods contribute

to job creation for marginalized populations, the strengthening of local economies, the promotion of economic autonomy, and the encouragement of responsible production practices. Similarly, social enterprises located in areas with a high HDI also foster job creation, local economic development, and responsible production. However, in these contexts, their impact is more strongly associated with the construction of collaborative ecosystems, the facilitation of market intermediation, and the reduction of infrastructural barriers that limit inclusive economic participation.

The results related to Research Proposition 3 indicate that social enterprises are not only affected by formal and informal institutional voids, but also act as agents that contribute to mitigating formal voids. This evidence is in line with the literature that recognizes social enterprises as hybrid institutional actors capable of filling gaps left by the state and the market (Mair; Battilana; Cardenas, 2012; Webb et al., 2009).

The study by Colovic and Schruoffenegger (2021) demonstrated that social enterprises located in favelas contribute to increasing the employability of women and young people, as well as promoting the professional qualification of these groups. These initiatives function as important vectors of social inclusion, offering job and training opportunities in territories historically marked by exclusion and lack of access to formal resources. Similarly, the study by Sydow et al. (2022) on social enterprises in Kenya showed that, after the creation of these organizations in economically disadvantaged areas, there was an increase in employment and professional qualification opportunities. These findings reinforce the role of social enterprises as instruments of economic empowerment and local economic strengthening, capable of transforming contexts of vulnerability into spaces for income generation and learning.

Social enterprises also engage in responsible production by acting as key developers of the impact business ecosystem, in addition to promoting the elimination of non-ecological practices, such as open-air dumps. Through initiatives focused on waste reduction, recycling, and the circular economy, these organizations contribute to environmental preservation while generating social value. The findings on rural social enterprises in Malawi and Zambia illustrate how this type of organization can build networks of partners, including local communities, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies, to develop sustainable solutions for waste management and resource use (Luiz; Kachika; Kudzurunga 2019). Such collaborative approaches not only stimulate local development and environmental awareness, but also reinforce the systemic role of social enterprises as catalysts of sustainable transformation.

Social enterprises also help reduce infrastructure barriers by providing or facilitating access to basic sanitation and essential services for vulnerable populations. Such interventions

are particularly relevant in contexts where institutional voids, such as the lack of adequate infrastructure (Khanna; Palepu, 1997) hinder market functioning, constrain market development, and limit the participation of marginalized groups. By addressing these infrastructural gaps, social enterprises enhance community well-being and enable the inclusion of previously excluded populations in local economic systems. In doing so, they contribute to building the foundational conditions for sustainable social and economic development, bridging the gap left by both the state and the private sector.

Still regarding Research Proposition 3, the findings confirm that social enterprises help mitigate informal institutional voids. Specifically, social enterprises in both peripheral and affluent neighborhoods contribute to the social inclusion of marginalized groups, the reduction of racial prejudice, and the promotion of environmental awareness in society, thereby addressing key informal voids. These results highlight the capacity of social enterprises to influence social norms and behaviors, particularly in contexts where traditional institutions fail to promote inclusion or environmental responsibility.

The findings are consistent with previous studies. In Canada, for example, the case of Upcycle Kitchen illustrates how a social enterprise model can redefine narratives and reduce stigmas associated with social exclusion and food waste. The organization develops a food upcycling model that reuses rejected food and, at the same time, offers training and employment opportunities for people in situations of economic vulnerability (Vander Vennen; Parizeau, 2025).

Social enterprises also play an important role in reducing racial prejudice and promoting cultural diversity and representation. By generating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for Black and marginalized people, these organizations contribute to breaking down structural barriers of exclusion and increasing the visibility of historically marginalized groups. Furthermore, through symbolic initiatives, such as the production of Black rag dolls and other products that value Afro-Brazilian identity, these companies challenge hegemonic aesthetic standards and promote a cultural shift in how society perceives beauty and racial representation. In this way, the impact of social enterprises transcends the economic aspect, also acting in the transformation of mindsets and the deconstruction of racial stigmas that perpetuate social inequalities.

Although Kopkin's (2017) research did not specifically investigate social enterprises, but rather entrepreneurship in general, its findings reinforce the structural nature of racial prejudice as an informal institutional void. (Kopkin, 2017) demonstrates that racialized bias in the United States results in systematic difficulty for Black entrepreneurs to obtain financing,

which in turn affects the development, survival and scalability of their ventures. This evidence suggests that the problem is not exclusively Brazilian, nor restricted to the context of low-income territories; rather, it reflects a broader macro-social mechanism in which race functions as a barrier to resource mobilization and institutional legitimacy.

Social enterprises also contribute to raising environmental awareness in society by incorporating sustainable practices and disseminating values of ecological responsibility in their activities. Through actions such as recycling, reuse of waste, use of sustainable materials, and community environmental education, these organizations sensitize consumers and communities about the importance of reducing the environmental impact of daily practices. In addition to acting directly to mitigate problems such as waste and pollution, social enterprises influence collective behaviors and local policies, strengthening a culture of sustainability and environmental citizenship. Thus, they contribute not only to the preservation of natural resources but also to the formation of a critical and engaged awareness of socio-environmental issues.

Although the findings resonate with prior international literature, the originality of this study lies in its integrated and multilevel analytical approach, which simultaneously examines formal and informal institutional voids, intranational territorial differences (peripheral neighborhoods versus high-HDI areas), and the bidirectional role of social enterprises—not only as organizations shaped by their environments, but also as actors capable of transforming them. Unlike previous studies that tend to analyze institutional dimensions in isolation or focus on single contextual layers, this research demonstrates how different types of voids interact, reinforce one another, and generate distinct effects depending on territorial and socioeconomic conditions. By empirically revealing these within-country variations, the study advances theoretical understanding of institutional dynamics in the Global South and refines analytical models that have traditionally relied on cross-national rather than subnational comparisons.

Furthermore, the value of this research lies in its simultaneous contributions to theory, practice, and public policy. Theoretically, it advances the field by showing how social enterprises function as hybrid institutional actors capable of mitigating structural gaps, reshaping social norms, and fostering localized systemic change. Practically, it provides evidence that can guide social entrepreneurs, impact investors, and support organizations in designing strategies aligned with the specific institutional realities of different territories. From a policy perspective, the findings offer concrete insights for developing regulatory frameworks, training initiatives, and funding mechanisms better suited to the hybrid nature of social enterprises. Therefore, rather than merely reproducing patterns already identified elsewhere,

this study adds scholarly and practical value by demonstrating how these dynamics materialize, interact, and produce context-specific outcomes in the analyzed setting, strengthening both the empirical and conceptual foundations of the field.

5.2 A New Theoretical Model

Based on the results of this study and existing knowledge in the field, a new conceptual framework was developed, as presented in Figure 4.

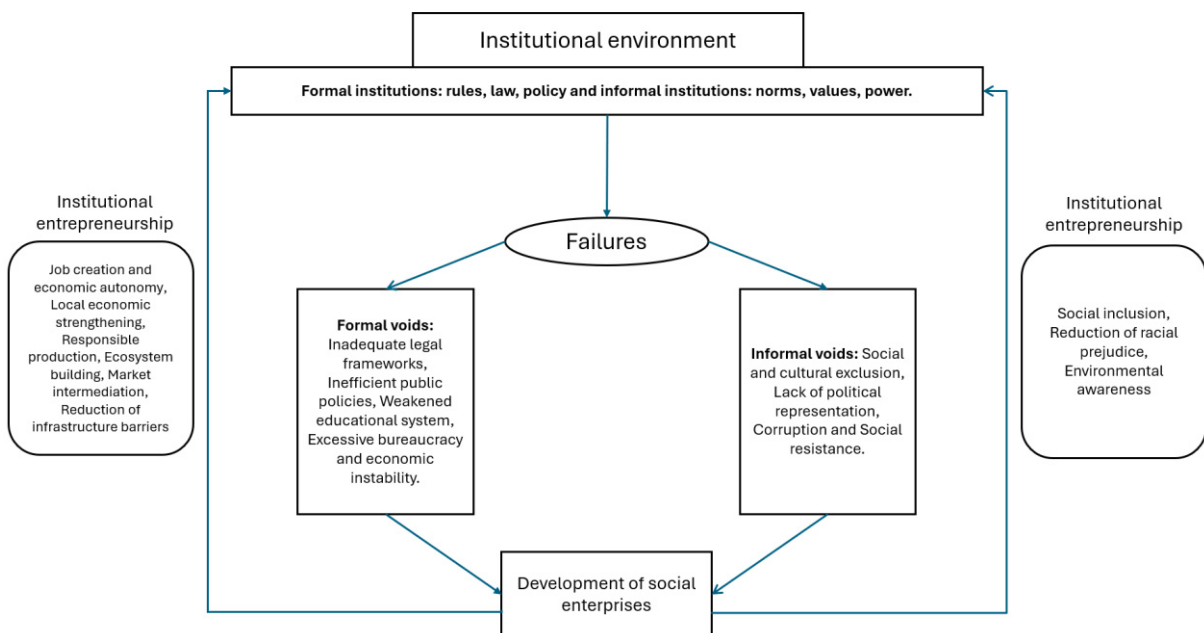


Figure 4. Theoretical framework
Source: Author' own creation (2026).

Governments, as configurations of formal and informal institutions, can fail to provide adequate support, regulation, or enforcement, thereby generating formal institutional voids (e.g., gaps in laws, bureaucratic inefficiencies, poorly adapted financing mechanisms) and informal institutional voids (e.g., social stigma, territorial prejudice, racial bias, low environmental literacy, and distrust). These voids create structural barriers that limit the development, legitimacy, and sustainability of social enterprises. In this sense, the voids are not accidental but emerge directly from the state's inability to fully meet societal needs, particularly in marginalized or underserved communities.

Social enterprises respond to these voids by acting as institutional entrepreneurs from the bottom up, mobilizing resources, knowledge, and networks to mitigate the same voids that governments fail to address. Through their actions, they provide public goods, create

infrastructure solutions, organize markets, generate employment, promote social inclusion, and foster cultural and environmental transformation. In doing so, social enterprises do not only pursue economic and social objectives but also enact bottom-up institutional change, reshaping norms, values, and behaviors, and gradually influencing the broader institutional environment that originally produced the voids. This dynamic illustrates a cyclical relationship: state failures create voids, which social enterprises mitigate while simultaneously transforming the social and institutional context.

Building on this framework, one of the most original findings of the study lies in demonstrating that institutional voids are not uniform across urban space, but vary significantly within the same city according to territorial inequalities. By comparing social enterprises operating in high-HDI and low-HDI neighborhoods, the research shows that voids are spatially differentiated and layered, combining distinct configurations of formal and informal constraints. In low-HDI areas, enterprises tend to confront more acute deficiencies related to infrastructure, public services, and access to credit, whereas in high-HDI areas, challenges are more often associated with regulatory complexity, market competition, or legitimacy within established institutional systems. This intra-urban perspective advances existing literature, which has traditionally examined institutional voids primarily at the national or regional level, by highlighting the importance of micro-territorial contexts.

Another key contribution is the identification of social enterprises as hybrid institutional actors that simultaneously compensate for and transform institutional deficiencies. Rather than acting only as substitutes for absent state functions, the cases analyzed reveal that these organizations frequently engage in practices that reshape local norms, expectations, and relationships among stakeholders. This suggests that their role extends beyond service provision: they function as catalysts of institutional reconfiguration, particularly in marginalized territories where conventional governance mechanisms are weakest. Such evidence refines theoretical understandings of institutional entrepreneurship by illustrating how change can emerge incrementally through localized, practice-based interventions.

Finally, the findings indicate that the interaction between institutional voids and social enterprises is recursive and dynamic rather than linear. Institutional gaps shape the strategies, organizational models, and impact pathways of social enterprises, while the actions of these enterprises, in turn, modify the very environments that produced those gaps. This cyclical relationship constitutes a central theoretical insight of the dissertation, as it reframes institutional voids not merely as constraints but also as conditions that can stimulate innovation, experimentation, and new governance arrangements. In this sense, the study contributes to the

literature by proposing a more relational and process-oriented understanding of institutional voids and their role in shaping socially oriented entrepreneurship.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The results of this study contribute to the advancement of Institutional Theory, especially in the field of hybrid organizations and social enterprises, by highlighting how formal and informal institutional gaps shape and limit the performance of these organizations in emerging economies. The research reinforces the premise that institutions (both formal and informal) constitute central elements in defining organizational opportunities and constraints.

Firstly, the findings broaden the understanding of the role of formal institutions (laws, public policies, and educational systems) in the legitimization and support of social enterprises. The identification of regulatory and bureaucratic gaps indicates that the absence of a specific legal framework weakens the institutionalization process of this type of organization, hindering its insertion into already established organizational fields. Thus, this study contributes theoretically by showing that, in contexts of formal voids, the legitimacy of social enterprises tends to be constructed pragmatically and morally, based on results and social values, rather than on traditional regulatory mechanisms.

Secondly, the results regarding informal institutional voids (such as social exclusion, corruption, and cultural resistance) broaden the discussion on the influence of social values, norms, and beliefs on the consolidation of social enterprises. These findings engage with the literature that understands institutions as symbolic and cognitive constructions (DiMaggio; Powell, 1983; Scott, 2014), demonstrating that the absence of social trust, prejudice, and lack of political representation constitute barriers that go beyond the structural level and directly affect the cultural legitimacy of organizations.

Furthermore, this study contributes to institutional theory by highlighting the role of social enterprises as institutional agents capable of filling and transforming institutional voids. By operating in marginalized territories, these organizations not only adapt to existing institutional constraints but also reconfigure local norms, values, and practices, promoting new forms of economic and social coordination. This finding reinforces the notion that social entrepreneurs perform the functions of institutional entrepreneurs by creating and disseminating alternative arrangements for governance, inclusion, and sustainability.

Finally, the research broadens the analytical scope of institutional theory by proposing a conceptual model that integrates formal and informal dimensions of institutional voids,

highlighting the interdependent nature of these spheres and their combined effects on the performance and legitimacy of social enterprises. This theoretical framework contributes to understanding how different types of voids interact and how hybrid organizations can respond to them through multi-scalar institutional strategies involving adaptation, resistance, and transformation.

5.4 Practical Implications

The results of this research offer relevant contributions for social enterprise managers, governments, and public policy makers, revealing concrete paths for strengthening the social impact ecosystem in contexts of institutional vacuums.

For social enterprise managers, the findings indicate the importance of developing multiple legitimation strategies that combine tangible social outcomes, organizational transparency, and community engagement. In contexts marked by bureaucracy and economic instability, strengthening collaborative networks and intersectoral partnerships (with universities, NGOs, private companies, and local governments) is recommended as a way to reduce dependence on scarce resources and increase organizational resilience. Furthermore, managers should invest in the development of technical and entrepreneurial skills, especially among members of marginalized communities, in order to promote autonomy and long-term sustainability.

For governments, the evidence reinforces the need to legally recognize and regulate social enterprises as a specific category of hybrid organization, distinct from both the third sector and conventional businesses. The creation of an appropriate legal framework, the simplification of bureaucratic processes, and the establishment of differentiated public and fiscal financing mechanisms are essential measures to reduce barriers and foster the development of the sector. Furthermore, policies focused on entrepreneurial and social education can help fill gaps in the educational system and prepare new generations of entrepreneurs committed to social and environmental impact.

For policymakers and actors in the impact ecosystem, the results suggest the importance of strengthening the political and institutional representation of social enterprises. This can be done through participatory councils, regional forums, and advocacy networks that amplify the voice of these entrepreneurs in decision-making processes. Moreover, policies aimed at reducing cultural and symbolic barriers, such as campaigns promoting diversity, combating

racism, and encouraging conscious consumption, can contribute to reducing social resistance and increasing recognition of social enterprises as legitimate agents of transformation.

Finally, the evidence shows that the actions of social enterprises have the potential to complement and strengthen state actions in areas where institutional gaps are deepest, especially with regard to social inclusion, income generation, and environmental sustainability. Thus, public policies that encourage cooperation between the state, the market, and civil society can generate synergies capable of expanding the reach and effectiveness of social impact in the long term.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This section addresses the central considerations that guided the development of the research. It recapitulates the research problem, the most relevant results achieved in accordance with the specific objectives outlined, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future investigations.

6.1 Purpose Of The Research

Following a literature review that revealed room for further research investigating the relationship between institutional gaps and social enterprises in emerging markets, this study sought to understand the role of the institutional environment in the development of social enterprises in Brazil.

Based on the identification of theoretical gaps, three research propositions were developed to address the research problem. To explore these assumptions and answer the research question, eight case studies of social enterprises located in Fortaleza and São Paulo were conducted. The results were organized according to the specific research objectives and are presented below.

a) Select social enterprises by analyzing their mission, motivators, and barriers

The eight initiatives analyzed demonstrate missions that combine social purpose and economic sustainability, although each operates in distinct sectors (food, textile recycling, technology, waste management, employability, urban agriculture, energy and footwear). In common, they all stem from socially experienced problems in their territories: lack of income for women and the LGBTQIA+ population, low access to formal employment, waste of textile or organic residues, difficulty accessing healthy food, and lack of visibility for sustainable businesses. The founders are driven by personal values and experiences (care, spirituality, community activism, pain in the face of inequality), and translate this into business models with the ambition of systemic transformation. The motivations are always linked to creating concrete and measurable impact for vulnerable populations.

However, the barriers are also structural and recurrent among the cases: territorial stigma; initial societal disbelief about products made with "waste"; difficulty in communicating value; the need to educate consumers and clients; lack of networks and support for the start of

the business; bureaucracies and taxes; Competition with larger players; and the difficulty of recognizing and positioning themselves as businesses (and not as NGOs). Even so, these organizations build creative solutions: use of proprietary technologies, reuse of materials, strategic partnerships, digital platforms, and hybrid revenue models. Thus, despite the adverse environment, these cases illustrate the entrepreneurial capacity to transform socio-environmental problems into opportunities for impact and income and show that social innovation in Brazil is born from scarcity, but is sustained by the combination of purpose, model, and agency to change realities.

b) Analyze how formal institutional voids influence the development of social enterprises

The results show that formal institutional voids affect the development of social enterprises (SEs), but impact more strongly those located in peripheral territories, i.e., areas with low HDI. Failures in the legal framework, lack of specific legal recognition, absence of tax benefits for impact businesses, and financing models poorly adapted to the size and reality of the enterprises compromise access to markets, resources, and partnerships. Inefficient or non-existent public policies in low-income territories increase the dependence of the SEs themselves to do what the State does not: generate opportunities, produce local knowledge, organize networks, and offer essential services. This is linked to the systemic educational deficit: lack of financial literacy, entrepreneurial education, and technical training, which weakens human capital, delays formalization, and limits scalability.

Furthermore, the interviews reveal that excessive bureaucracy, disproportionate documentary requirements, and macroeconomic instability act as transversal barriers present in both low- and high-HDI areas. The difficulty of competing with larger companies in public tenders and government procurement, coupled with increased costs and lower consumer willingness to pay more for sustainability in recessionary scenarios, reduces margins and discourages innovation. In practice, the institutional vacuum not only hinders the existence of state-owned enterprises; it shapes their business models, forces improvised arrangements, and shifts the responsibility for producing public goods to civil society, revealing how the State creates asymmetries and then relies on them.

c) Analyze how informal institutional voids influence the development of social enterprises

Informal institutional voids materialize in territorial stigma, discrimination, distrust, and a lack of social repertoire to recognize innovative business models. These elements permeate both Fortaleza and São Paulo. The absence of social legitimacy (for the territory, for the beneficiary public, or for the business model itself) reduces demand, drives away partners, constrains access to markets, and generates cycles of exclusion: it is not legitimized because it does not grow, and it does not grow because it is not legitimized. These voids also appear as a lack of political representation and a lack of real channels for peripheral problems to be translated into a public agenda. Also informal are the dynamics of corruption and non-transparent practices in the market (from recycling to sanitation), which increase risk, create asymmetries, and discourage trust.

Even in areas of high HDI, institutional informality appears in social and moral resistance to progressive agendas (e.g., LGBT+, climate change), and in prejudice against alternative forms of presentation and management (managers who "don't look like executives"). In other words, it is not only the "formal state" that creates barriers: cultural norms, dominant social values, and traditional consumption expectations operate as informal institutions that limit the development of social innovation. Taken together, these informal voids structure what a social innovation company can say, represent, and sell, and therefore shape the possibility of growth and scaling its impact.

d) Examine how social enterprises, through their positive impact, mitigate formal and informal institutional voids in the environment.

The results show that social enterprises mitigate formal institutional voids by generating decent work, locally distributed income, responsible production, infrastructure solutions (mainly sanitation and energy), and the construction of impact ecosystems where the State does not reach. They function as "substitute social infrastructure": they connect supply and demand when there is no organized market, reduce asymmetric information, build networks, create distribution channels, teach how to use sustainable technologies, and shift part of the transactional cost produced by bureaucracy, the absence of policies, and the precariousness of infrastructure. They become intermediaries, translators, and organizers of markets, while producing public goods (environment, health, education) without equivalent formal recognition.

Simultaneously, they mitigate informal voids by producing concrete inclusion of marginalized groups, questioning territorial stigmas, generating representativeness, and increasing environmental literacy. They create new narratives (about who is "talented," about what "value" is, and about who "should" occupy the space of consumption and production), and in doing so, they create positive cultural externalities: they reduce prejudice, normalize diversity, and spread ecologically responsible behaviors. Thus, social stratifications act as agents of bottom-up institutional transformation: while navigating the system, they begin to rewrite formal and informal rules through practice.

6.2 Limitations Of This Study

Although the qualitative design and multiple case study approach were appropriate for the research objectives, this strategy has inherent limitations. The small number of cases does not allow for generalization of the findings to all social enterprises operating in emerging markets. Furthermore, the empirical construction is based on subjective perceptions of directly involved actors, which may produce perception biases favorable to these ventures, even with triangulation between different informant profiles (founders, employees, and customers).

Finally, the data identify perceived mechanisms for mitigating institutional voids, but do not measure the duration of the effects over time. There are also geographical limitations: the empirical focus was restricted to two large urban centers, which does not allow for inferences in variations in regions with distinct sociopolitical arrangements (for example, social enterprises in the Brazilian Amazon).

6.3 Avenues for Future Studies

Future research could advance toward mixed-methods designs, combining qualitative analyses with quantitative measurements. These designs would allow for testing the magnitude of impact, modeling causal relationships, and comparing different business models. Furthermore, future studies could analyze the role of network building in the relationship between institutional voids and the development of social enterprises.

Another opportunity is to expand the scope of contexts. Future studies could include traditional indigenous populations or rural social enterprises. In addition, research could shift the analytical lens to capture not only the institutional environment but also to understand,

through a multilevel analysis and different theoretical lenses, how different levels can affect the development of social enterprises.

REFERENCES

- AGOSTINI, M. R.; BITENCOURT, C. C.; VIEIRA, L. M. Social innovation in Mexican coffee production: filling ‘institutional voids’. **International Review of Applied Economics**, v. 34, n. 5, p. 607–625, 2020. Disponível em: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02692171.2019.1638351>>.
- ANDION, C.; ALPERSTEDT, G. D.; GRAEFF, J. F.; RONCONI, L. Social innovation ecosystems and sustainability in cities: a study in Florianópolis, Brazil. **Environment, Development and Sustainability**, v. 24, n. 1, p. 1259–1281, 2022. Disponível em: <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-021-01496-9>>.
- AUDRETSCH, D. B.; BELITSKI, M.; EICHLER, G. M.; SCHWARZ, E. Entrepreneurial ecosystems, institutional quality, and the unexpected role of the sustainability orientation of entrepreneurs. **Small Business Economics**, 4 abr. 2023.
- BACQ, S.; JANSSEN, F. The multiple faces of social entrepreneurship: A review of definitional issues based on geographical and thematic criteria. **Entrepreneurship and Regional Development**, v. 23, n. 5–6, p. 373–403, 2011.
- BARDIN, L. **Análise de Conteúdo**. [s.l: s.n.]
- BATTILANA, J. Cracking the organizational challenge of pursuing joint social and financial goals: Social enterprise as a laboratory to understand hybrid organizing. **M@n@gement**, v. 21, n. 4, p. 1278, 2018.
- BELAYUTHAM, S.; CHE IBRAHIM, C. K. I.; ZULKIFLI, A. R.; IBRAHIM, N. A dual-functional social innovation process model for low-cost houses through university-enabled initiative. **Construction Innovation**, v. 19, n. 2, p. 126–148, 2019.
- BEZERRA-DE-SOUSA, I. G.; SEGATTO, A. P.; MORAIS-DA-SILVA, R. L.; JUSTEN, G. S. As atividades que compõem as fases do processo de inovação social: um estudo no contexto dos negócios de impacto social. **Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios**, v. 24, n. 1, p. 126–143, 2022.
- BIERNACKI, P.; WALDORF, D. Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. **Sociological Methods & Research**, v. 10, n. 2, p. 141–163, 1981.
- BITTENCOURT, T. A.; GIANNOTTI, M.; MARQUES, E. Cumulative (and self-reinforcing) spatial inequalities: Interactions between accessibility and segregation in four Brazilian metropolises. **Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science**, v. 48, n. 7, p. 1989–2005, 23 set. 2021.
- BJERREGAARD, T.; LAURING, J. Entrepreneurship as institutional change: Strategies of bridging institutional contradictions. **European Management Review**, v. 9, n. 1, p. 31–43, 2012.
- BORCHARDT, M.; DA SILVA, M. G.; DE CARVALHO, M. N. M.; BURDZINSKI, C. S.; KIRST, R. W.; PEREIRA, G. M.; DA SILVA, M. A. Uncaptured Value in the Business Model: Analysing its Modes in Social Enterprises in the Sustainable Fashion Industry. **Journal of Creating Value**, v. 10, n. 1, p. 79–101, 6 maio 2024.

- BOTHELLO, J.; NASON, R. S.; SCHNYDER, G. Institutional Voids and Organization Studies: Towards an epistemological rupture. **Organization Studies**, v. 40, n. 10, p. 1499–1512, 2019a.
- BOTHELLO, J.; NASON, R. S.; SCHNYDER, G. Institutional Voids and Organization Studies: Towards an epistemological rupture. **Organization Studies**, v. 40, n. 10, p. 1499–1512, 2019b.
- BOUILLOUD, J. P.; PÉREZTS, M.; VIALE, T.; SCHAEPELYNCK, V. Beyond the Stable Image of Institutions: Using Institutional Analysis to Tackle Classic Questions in Institutional Theory. **Organization Studies**, v. 41, n. 2, p. 153–174, 2020.
- BOULLOSA, R. de F.; PERES, J. L. P. The democratic transformation of public policy through community activism in Brazil. **Policy & Politics**, v. 50, n. 3, p. 341–361, jul. 2022.
- BRAVIM, J. M.; DE CARVALHO, A. C. V.; SEGATTO, A. P.; MORAIS-DA-SILVA, R. L. Are there key characteristics of social enterprises that foster relationships with government, universities and civil society? **Social Enterprise Journal**, 29 abr. 2025.
- BRIX-ASALA, C.; SEURING, S. Bridging institutional voids via supplier development in base of the pyramid supply chains. **Production Planning and Control**, v. 31, n. 11–12, p. 903–919, 2020.
- CERTO, S. T.; MILLER, T. Social entrepreneurship: Key issues and concepts. **Business Horizons**, v. 51, n. 4, p. 267–271, 2008.
- CHUA, F.; RAHMAN, A. Institutional Pressures and Ethical Reckoning by Business Corporations. **Journal of Business Ethics**, v. 98, n. 2, p. 307–329, 2011.
- COLOVIC, A.; SCHRUFFENEGGER, M. Institutional Voids and Business Model Innovation: How Grassroots Social Businesses Advance Deprived Communities in Emerging Economies. **Management and Organization Review**, v. 17, n. 2, p. 314–343, 2021a.
- COLOVIC, A.; SCHRUFFENEGGER, M. Institutional Voids and Business Model Innovation: How Grassroots Social Businesses Advance Deprived Communities in Emerging Economies. **Management and Organization Review**, v. 17, n. 2, p. 314–343, 2021b.
- COMINI, G. M.; FISCHER, R. M.; D’AMARIO, E. Q. Social business and social innovation: the Brazilian experience. **Innovation and Management Review**, v. 19, n. 2, p. 140–155, 2022.
- COMPANY A REPORT. **Management Report 2024**. Fortaleza: [Company A], 2024.
- COMPANY D REPORT. **Management Report 2024**. Fortaleza: [Company D], 2024.
- COMPANY E REPORT. **Management Report 2025**. São Paulo: [Company E], 2025.
- COMPANY G REPORT. **Management Report 2025**. São Paulo: [Company G], 2025.
- CORREIA, S. É. N.; DE OLIVEIRA, V. M.; GOMEZ, C. R. P. Dimensions of social innovation and the roles of organizational actor: The proposition of a framework. **Revista de Administracao Mackenzie**, v. 17, n. 6, p. 102–133, 2016.

- CURTIS, S.; GESLER, W.; SMITH, G.; WASHBURN, S. Approaches to sampling and case selection in qualitative research: examples in the geography of health. **Social Science & Medicine**, v. 50, n. 7–8, p. 1001–1014, abr. 2000.
- DACIN, M. T.; VENTRESCA, M. J.; BEAL, B. D. The embeddedness of organizations: Dialogue & directions. **Journal of Management**, v. 25, n. 3, p. 317–356, 1999.
- DACIN, P.; DACIN, M.; MATEAR, M. Social entrepreneurship: Why we don't need a new theory and how we move forward from here. **Academy of Management Perspectives**, v. 24, n. 3, p. 37–57, 2010.
- DAHLES, H.; VERVER, M.; KHIENG, S.; MANDERS, I.; SCHELLENS, N. Scaling Up Social Enterprise: Predicament or Prospect in a Comparative Perspective. **Journal of Social Entrepreneurship**, v. 11, n. 3, p. 317–342, 25 set. 2020.
- DE BEULE, F.; KLEIN, M.; VERWAAL, E. Institutional quality and inclusive strategies at the base of the pyramid. **Journal of World Business**, v. 55, n. 5, p. 101066, 2020.
- DE CLERCQ, D.; LIM, D. S. K.; OH, C. H. Individual-level resources and new business activity: The contingent role of institutional context. **Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice**, v. 37, n. 2, p. 303–330, 2013.
- DEFOURNY, J.; NYSSSENS, M. Social enterprise in Europe: recent trends and developments. **Social Enterprise Journal**, v. 4, n. 3, p. 202–228, 26 set. 2008.
- DE SILVA, M.; KHAN, Z.; VORLEY, T.; ZENG, J. Transcending the pyramid: opportunity co-creation for social innovation. **Industrial Marketing Management**, v. 89, n. September 2019, p. 471–486, 2020.
- DI BERARDINO, C.; D'INGIULLO, D.; QUAGLIONE, D.; SARRA, A. Migration and institutional quality across Italian provinces: The role of human capital. **Papers in Regional Science**, v. 98, n. 2, p. 843–860, 2019.
- DI DOMENICO, M. L.; HAUGH, H.; TRACEY, P. Social bricolage: Theorizing social value creation in social enterprises. **Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice**, v. 34, n. 4, p. 681–703, 2010.
- DIMAGGIO, P. J.; POWELL, W. W. The Iron Cage Revisited : Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. **American Sociological Review**, v. 48, n. 2, p. 147–160, 1983a.
- DIMAGGIO, P.; POWELL, W. The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism in Organizational Fields. **American Sociological Review**, v. 48, n. 2, p. 147–160, 1983b.
- DOHERTY, B.; HAUGH, H.; LYON, F. Social Enterprises as Hybrid Organizations: A Review and Research Agenda. **International Journal of Management Reviews**, v. 16, n. 4, p. 417–436, 2014.
- EBRAHIM, A.; BATTILANA, J.; MAIR, J. The governance of social enterprises: Mission drift and accountability challenges in hybrid organizations. **Research in Organizational Behavior**, v. 34, p. 81–100, 2014.

EISENHARDT, K. M.; GRAEBNER, M. E. Theory Building from Cases: Opportunities and Challenges. **The Academy of Management Journal**, v. 50, n. 1, p. 25–32, 2007.

ETCHART, N.; COMOLLI, L. The Regulatory and Policy Vacuum for Social Enterprise in Latin America. *Em: Social Enterprise in Emerging Market Countries*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013. p. 13–34.

FARIA, K. A.; LIMA, S. D. De; GHESTI, G. F. Cooperative technological development and business generation among start-ups and medium and large companies. Case study: Nexos Program (Brazil). **International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management**, v. 25, n. 6, p. 441, 2021.

FERNANDES, E. da S.; GROCHAU, I. H.; TEN CATEN, C. S. Impact Investing: Determinants of External Financing of Social Enterprises in Brazil. **Sustainability**, v. 15, n. 15, p. 11935, 3 ago. 2023.

FERNANDES, J.; MASON, K.; CHAKRABARTI, R. Managing to make market agencements: The temporally bound elements of stigma in favelas. **Journal of Business Research**, v. 95, p. 128–142, fev. 2019.

FREITAS, C. F. S. Insurgent planning? Insights from two decades of the Right to the City in Fortaleza, Brazil. **City**, v. 23, n. 3, p. 285–305, 4 maio 2019.

FREITAS, F. L. da S.; COSTA, M. C. L. Urban insecurity, fragmentation and fortified enclaves in the Fortaleza metropolitan region. **Mercator**, v. 21, n. 2, p. 1–12, 15 dez. 2022.

FU, J. S.; YAN, S. How Do New Forms of Organizations Manage Institutional Voids? Social Enterprises' Quest for Sociopolitical Legitimacy. **Business & Society**, 2024.

FU, J. S.; YAN, S. Institutional complexity and social innovation: the case of Chinese social enterprises. **Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations**, v. 36, n. 1, p. 85-97, 2025.

GALERA, G.; BORZAGA, C. Social enterprise: An international overview of its conceptual evolution and legal implementation. **Social Enterprise Journal**, v. 5, n. 3, p. 210–228, 13 nov. 2009.

GALLO, I.; MELÉ, D. Work Integration of People with Mental Disorders Through Social Enterprise: A Humanistic-Personalist Framework and Case Study. **Journal of Business Ethics**, 28 nov. 2024.

GAO, C.; ZUZUL, T.; JONES, G.; KHANNA, T. Overcoming Institutional Voids: A Reputation-Based View of Long-Run Survival. **Strategic Management Journal**, v. 38, n. 11, p. 2147–2167, 2017.

GARCIA-LOMAS, I.; GABALDON, P. Gender – From Variable to Lens in Social Enterprises: A Literature Review and Research Agenda for Women's Involvement in Social Ventures. **Journal of Social Entrepreneurship**, v. 14, n. 2, p. 152–176, 2023.

GEORGE, G.; CORBISHLEY, C.; KHAYESI, J. N. O.; HAAS, M. R.; TIHANYI, L. Bringing Africa in: Promising directions for management research. **Academy of Management Journal**, v. 59, n. 2, p. 377–393, 2016.

GIOIA, D. A.; CORLEY, K. G.; HAMILTON, A. L. Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research. **Organizational Research Methods**, v. 16, n. 1, p. 15–31, 2013.

GIROTTI, C.; OLIVEIRA, M. C. Q. D.; SATO, A. E.; CHIQUETTO, J. B.; SANTOS, A. P.; DE MIRANDA, R. M.; MÜLFARTH, R. C. K.; SHIMOMURA, A. R. P.; LOPEZ, J. M. R. Urban mobility and air pollution at the neighbourhood scale in the Megacity of São Paulo, Brazil. **Discover Cities**, v. 1, n. 1, p. 13, 20 ago. 2024.

GOBO, G. Sampling, Representativeness and Generalizability. *Em: Qualitative Research Practice*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London England EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom : SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004. p. 405–426.

GOYAL, S.; AGRAWAL, A.; SERGI, B. S. Social entrepreneurship for scalable solutions addressing sustainable development goals (SDGs) at BoP in India. **Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal**, v. 16, n. 3–4, p. 509–529, 2021.

GRANOVETTER, M. Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. **American Journal of Sociology**, v. 91, n. 3, p. 481–510, 1985.

GUPTA, P.; CHAUHAN, S.; PAUL, J.; JAISWAL, M. P. Social entrepreneurship research: A review and future research agenda. **Journal of Business Research**, v. 113, p. 209–229, maio 2020.

HALL, P. A.; SOSKICE, D. **Varieties of Capitalism: The institutional foundations of comparative advantage**. [s.l: s.n.]1–557 p.

HANNAN, M. T.; FREEMAN, J. The Population Ecology of Organizations. **American Journal of Sociology**, v. 82, n. 5, p. 929–964, 1977.

HASE UETA, M.; TANAKA, J.; MARCHIONI, D. M. L.; VERLY, E.; CARVALHO, A. M. de. Food sustainability in a context of inequalities: meat consumption changes in Brazil (2008–2017). **Environment, Development and Sustainability**, v. 26, n. 3, p. 6377–6391, 31 jan. 2023.

HAYHOE, R. B.; VALENTINE, A. Structural challenges for social enterprise in Canada. **Trusts & Trustees**, v. 19, n. 6, p. 519–525, 1 jul. 2013.

HEDBERG, L. M.; LOUNSBURY, M. Not just small potatoes: Cultural entrepreneurship in the moralizing of markets. **Organization Science**, v. 32, n. 2, p. 433–454, 2021.

HEUËR, A. Women-to-women entrepreneurial energy networks: A pathway to green energy uptake at the base of pyramid. **Sustainable Energy Technologies and Assessments**, v. 22, p. 116–123, ago. 2017.

HIDALGO, G.; MONTICELLI, J. M.; VARGAS BORTOLASO, I. Social Capital as a Driver of Social Entrepreneurship. **Journal of Social Entrepreneurship**, v. 15, n. 1, p. 182–205, 2 jan. 2024.

HOOGENDOORN, B. The Prevalence and Determinants of Social Entrepreneurship at the Macro Level. **Journal of Small Business Management**, v. 54, p. 278–296, 2016.

HOTA, P. K. Tracing the Intellectual Evolution of Social Entrepreneurship Research: Past Advances, Current Trends, and Future Directions. **Journal of Business Ethics**, v. 182, n. 3, p. 637–659, 10 jan. 2023.

HOTHOTH, J. J.; PEDERSEN, T. Beyond the ‘rules of the game’: Three institutional approaches and how they matter for international business. *Em*: **Handbook of Institutional Approaches to International Business**. [s.l.: s.n.]p. 236–273.

HUQ, F. A.; STEVENSON, M. Implementing Socially Sustainable Practices in Challenging Institutional Contexts: Building Theory from Seven Developing Country Supplier Cases. **Journal of Business Ethics**, v. 161, n. 2, p. 415–442, 23 jan. 2020.

JACKSON, G.; DEEG, R. Comparing capitalisms: Understanding institutional diversity and its implications for international business. **Journal of International Business Studies**, v. 39, n. 4, p. 540–561, 2008.

JAYAWARDHANA, K.; FERNANDO, I.; SIYAMBALAPITIYA, J. Sustainability in Social Enterprise Research: A Systematic Literature Review. **SAGE Open**, v. 12, n. 3, p. 215824402211232, 19 jul. 2022.

JING, Y.; GONG, T. Managed social innovation: The case of government-sponsored venture philanthropy in Shanghai. **Australian Journal of Public Administration**, v. 71, n. 2, p. 233–245, 2012.

JOÃO-ROLAND, I. de S.; GRANADOS, M. L. Social innovation drivers in social enterprises: systematic review. **Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development**, v. 27, n. 5, p. 775–795, 2020.

KAUSHIK, V.; TEWARI, S.; SAHASRANAMAM, S.; HOTA, P. K. Towards a precise understanding of social entrepreneurship: An integrated bibliometric–machine learning based review and research agenda. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 191, p. 122516, jun. 2023.

KERLIN, J. A.; LALL, S. A.; PENG, S.; CUI, T. S. Institutional intermediaries as legitimizing agents for social enterprise in China and India. **Public Management Review**, v. 23, n. 5, p. 731–753, 4 maio 2021.

KERLIN, J. A.; PENG, S.; CUI, T. S. Strategic responses of social enterprises to institutional pressures in China. **Journal of Asian Public Policy**, v. 14, n. 2, p. 200–224, 4 maio 2021.

KHOURY, T. A.; PRASAD, A. Entrepreneurship Amid Concurrent Institutional Constraints in Less Developed Countries. **Business and Society**, v. 55, n. 7, p. 934–969, 2016.

KLARIN, A.; SUSENO, Y. An Integrative Literature Review of Social Entrepreneurship Research: Mapping the Literature and Future Research Directions. **Business & Society**, v. 62, n. 3, p. 565–611, 20 mar. 2023. Disponível em: <<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00076503221101611>>.

KLEIN, C. H. Flipping the City: Space and Subjectivity in the São Paulo Periphery. **City & Society**, v. 31, n. 2, p. 142–163, 21 ago. 2019.

KOLK, A.; LENFANT, F. Hybrid business models for peace and reconciliation. **Business Horizons**, v. 59, n. 5, p. 503–524, 2016.

KOSTOVA, T.; BEUGELSDIJK, S.; SCOTT, W. R.; KUNST, V. E.; CHUA, C. H.; VAN ESSEN, M. The construct of institutional distance through the lens of different institutional perspectives: Review, analysis, and recommendations. **Journal of International Business Studies**, v. 51, n. 4, p. 467–497, 2020.

KRUSE, P.; WACH, D.; WEGGE, J. What motivates social entrepreneurs? A meta-analysis on predictors of the intention to found a social enterprise. **Journal of Small Business Management**, v. 59, n. 3, p. 477–508, 4 maio 2021.

KVALE, S.; BRINKMANN, S. **Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing**. London: Sage Publications, 2009.

LASHITEW, A. A.; VAN TULDER, R.; MUCHE, L. Social Value Creation in Institutional Voids: A Business Model Perspective. **Business and Society**, v. 61, n. 8, p. 1992–2037, 2022a.

LASHITEW, A. A.; VAN TULDER, R.; MUCHE, L. Social Value Creation in Institutional Voids: A Business Model Perspective. **Business & Society**, v. 61, n. 8, p. 1992–2037, 31 nov. 2022b.

LAZZARINI, S. G. The measurement of social impact and opportunities for research in business administration. **RAUSP Management Journal**, v. 53, n. 1, p. 134–137, jan. 2018.

LEE, C. K.; SIMMONS, S. A.; AMEZCUA, A.; LEE, J. Y.; LUMPKIN, G. T. Moderating Effects of Informal Institutions on Social Entrepreneurship Activity. **Journal of Social Entrepreneurship**, v. 13, n. 3, p. 340–365, 2 set. 2022.

LEITE, C. C.; GIANNOTTI, M.; GONÇALVES, G. Social housing and accessibility in Brazil's unequal cities. **Habitat International**, v. 127, n. 83, p. 102628, 2022.

LIEDONG, T. A.; PEPRAH, A. A.; AMARTEY, A. O.; RAJWANI, T. Institutional voids and firms' resource commitment in emerging markets: A review and future research agenda. **Journal of International Management**, v. 26, n. 3, p. 100756, 2020a.

LIEDONG, T. A.; PEPRAH, A. A.; AMARTEY, A. O.; RAJWANI, T. Institutional voids and firms' resource commitment in emerging markets: A review and future research agenda. **Journal of International Management**, v. 26, n. 3, p. 100756, 2020b.

LITTLEWOOD, D.; KHAN, Z. Insights from a systematic review of literature on social enterprise and networks: Where, how and what next? **Social Enterprise Journal**, v. 14, n. 4, p. 390–409, 2018.

LLADOS-MASLLORENS, J.; RUIZ-DOTRAS, E. Are women's entrepreneurial intentions and motivations influenced by financial skills? **International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship**, v. 14, n. 1, p. 69–94, 18 fev. 2022.

LUIZ, J. M.; KACHIKA, K.; KUDZURUNGA, T. Negotiating new institutional logics: Market access amongst smallholder farmers in Zambia and Malawi. **Society and Business Review**, v. 14, n. 4, p. 360–377, 2019.

MACÍAS-PRADA, J. F.; SILVA, Y.; ZAPATA, Á. M. The role of universities in Latin American social entrepreneurship ecosystems: a gender perspective. **International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship**, v. 16, n. 1, p. 47–68, 26 fev. 2024.

MAIR, J.; MARTÍ, I. Social entrepreneurship research: A source of explanation, prediction, and delight. **Journal of World Business**, v. 41, n. 1, p. 36–44, 2006.

MAIR, J.; MARTI, I. Entrepreneurship in and around institutional voids: A case study from Bangladesh. **Journal of Business Venturing**, v. 24, n. 5, p. 419–435, 2009.

MAIR, J.; MARTÍ, I.; VENTRESCA, M. J. Building inclusive markets in rural Bangladesh: How intermediaries work institutional voids. **Academy of Management Journal**, v. 55, n. 4, p. 819–850, 2012.

MAIR, J.; RATHERT, N. The Political Side of Social Enterprises: A Phenomenon-Based Study of Sociocultural and Policy Advocacy. **Journal of Management Studies**, 2025.

MARCONATTO, D.; BARIN CRUZ, L.; AGUILAR DELGADO, N. Mission Drift and the Sustainability of Hybrid Organizations in Extreme Institutional Contexts: The Case of a Communitarian Microfinance Institution in Brazil. **Management international**, v. 24, n. 4, p. 137–151, 16 nov. 2020.

MATHIAS, A. L. T. C.; SOUZA, A. G. V. de; RIBEIRO, M. de M. S. C. When social enterprise ecosystem shapes national public policy: examining Brazil's national impact economy strategy. **International Journal of Public Sector Management**, v. 37, n. 3, p. 370–387, 25 abr. 2024.

MAZZON, J. **Análise do programa de alimentação do trabalhador sob o conceito de marketing social**. 1981. Universidade de São Paulo, 1981.

MCCARTHY, D. J.; PUFFER, S. M. Institutional Voids in an Emerging Economy: From Problem to Opportunity. **Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies**, v. 23, n. 2, p. 208–219, 2016.

MCKENNA, S. A.; MAIN, D. S. The role and influence of key informants in community-engaged research: A critical perspective. **Action Research**, v. 11, n. 2, p. 113–124, 2013.

MCMULLEN, J. S.; BERGMAN, B. Social Entrepreneurship and the Development Paradox of Prosocial Motivation: A Cautionary Tale. **Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal**, v. 11, n. 3, p. 243–270, 2017.

MENDELL, M.; BARBOSA, E. Impact investing: a preliminary analysis of emergent primary and secondary exchange platforms. **Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment**, v. 3, n. 2, p. 111–123, abr. 2013.

MEYER, J. W.; ROWAN, B. Institutionalized Organizations : Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. **American Journal of Sociology**, v. 83, n. 2, p. 340–363, 1977.

MORAIS-DA-SILVA, R. L.; SEGATTO, A. P.; BEZERRA-DE-SOUSA, I. G. Connecting Two Sides: A Qualitative Study on Social Innovation Ventures and Poor Communities in an Emerging Economy. **Voluntas**, v. 31, n. 5, p. 966–980, 2020.

MORAIS-DA-SILVA, R. L.; SEGATTO, A. P.; BEZERRA-DE-SOUSA, I. G.; JUSTEN, G. S. Institutional change in the social innovation process: Evidence from an emerging context. **International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation**, p. 1–12, 2022.

MORGAN, G.; KRISTENSEN, P. H. The contested space of multinationals: Varieties of institutionalism, varieties of capitalism. **Human Relations**, v. 59, n. 11, p. 1467–1490, 2006.

MULDOON, J.; MCDOWELL, W. C.; KONOPASKE, R.; CRISTOFARO, M. Honest incompetence: exploring the dark side of social entrepreneurship. **International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research**, v. 31, n. 6, p. 1497–1516, 27 maio 2025.

MUÑOZ, P.; KIMMITT, J. Social mission as competitive advantage: A configurational analysis of the strategic conditions of social entrepreneurship. **Journal of Business Research**, v. 101, n. November 2018, p. 854–861, 2019.

MZEMBE, A. N.; NOVAKOVIC, Y.; MELISSEN, F.; KAMANGA, G. Institutional bricolage as an antecedent of social value creation in a developing country's tourism and hospitality industry. **Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management**, v. 26, n. 4, p. 997–1008, 2019.

NICHOLLS, A. Institutionalizing social entrepreneurship in regulatory space: Reporting and disclosure by community interest companies. **Accounting, Organizations and Society**, v. 35, n. 4, p. 394–415, maio 2010.

NORTH, D. C. Institutions. **The Journal of Economic Perspectives**, v. 5, n. 1, p. 97–112, 1991.

NWAUCHE, S.; CLAEYÉ, F. Institutional Voids: An Impediment to Social Enterprises in the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa. **Journal of Social Entrepreneurship**, v. 15, n. 3, p. 1088–1110, 5 set. 2024.

OLMEDO, L.; VAN TWUIJVER, M.; O'SHAUGHNESSY, M. Rurality as context for innovative responses to social challenges – The role of rural social enterprises. **Journal of Rural Studies**, v. 99, p. 272–283, abr. 2023.

OPOKU, E. E. O.; DOGAH, K. E.; KUFUOR, N. K.; ACHEAMPONG, A. O. The importance of human development in combating energy poverty. **Journal of International Development**, v.36, n.2, p. 1189-1209, 2024

PARTHASARATHY, B.; DEY, S.; GUPTA, P. Overcoming wicked problems and institutional voids for social innovation: University-NGO partnerships in the Global South. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 173, n. April 2020, p. 121104, 2021a.

PARTHASARATHY, B.; DEY, S.; GUPTA, P. Overcoming wicked problems and institutional voids for social innovation: University-NGO partnerships in the Global South. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 173, n. April 2020, p. 121104, 2021b.

PARTHIBAN, R.; QURESHI, I.; BANDYOPADHYAY, S.; BHATT, B.; JAIKUMAR, S. Leveraging ICT to Overcome Complementary Institutional Voids: Insights from Institutional Work by a Social Enterprise to Help Marginalized. **Information Systems Frontiers**, v. 22, n. 3, p. 633–653, 2020.

PATHAK, P.; DATTANI, P. Social return on investment: three technical challenges. **Social Enterprise Journal**, v. 10, n. 2, p. 91–104, 4 ago. 2014.

PEREDO, A. M.; MCLEAN, M. Social entrepreneurship: A critical review of the concept. **Journal of World Business**, v. 41, n. 1, p. 56–65, 2006.

PESTOFF, V.; HULGÅRD, L. Participatory Governance in Social Enterprise. **VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations**, v. 27, n. 4, p. 1742–1759, 2 ago. 2016.

PHAN TAN, L. Mapping the social entrepreneurship research: Bibliographic coupling, co-citation and co-word analyses. **Cogent Business and Management**, v. 8, n. 1, 2021.

PINKHAM, B. C.; PENG, M. W. Overcoming institutional voids via arbitration. **Journal of International Business Studies**, v. 48, n. 3, p. 344–359, 2017.

PINTO, D. G. L.; LOUREIRO, C. F. G.; SOUSA, F. F. L. de M.; MOTTE-BAUMVOL, B. The effects of informality on socio-spatial inequalities in accessibility to job opportunities: Evidence from Fortaleza, Brazil. **Journal of Transport Geography**, v. 108, p. 103577, abr. 2023.

PLAKOYIANNAKI, E.; WEI, T.; PRASHANTHAM, S. Rethinking Qualitative Scholarship in Emerging Markets: Researching, Theorizing, and Reporting. **Management and Organization Review**, v. 15, n. 2, p. 217–234, 2019.

PUFFER, S. M.; MCCARTHY, D. J.; JAEGER, A. M. Institution building and institutional voids. **International Journal of Emerging Markets**, v. 11, n. 1, p. 18–41, 18 jan. 2016.

QURESHI, I.; BHATT, B.; SUTTER, C.; SHUKLA, D. M. Social entrepreneurship and intersectionality: Mitigating extreme exclusion. **Journal of Business Venturing**, v. 38, n. 2, p. 106283, mar. 2023.

RAO-NICHOLSON, R.; VORLEY, T.; KHAN, Z. Social innovation in emerging economies: A national systems of innovation based approach. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 121, p. 228–237, 2017a. Disponível em: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.03.013>>.

RAO-NICHOLSON, R.; VORLEY, T.; KHAN, Z. Social innovation in emerging economies: A national systems of innovation based approach. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 121, p. 228–237, 2017b.

REICHERT, P.; HUDON, M.; SZAFARZ, A.; CHRISTENSEN, R. K. Crowding-in or Crowding-out? How Subsidies Signal the Path to Financial Independence of Social Enterprises. **Perspectives on Public Management and Governance**, v. 4, n. 3, p. 291–308, 27 ago. 2021.

REINECKE, P. C.; WRONA, T. Social Enterprise Referents: How Social Enterprises Help Organize Nascent Fields to Address Complex Societal Problems. **Journal of Management Studies**, 17 nov. 2024.

ROSCA, E.; AGARWAL, N.; BREM, A. Women entrepreneurs as agents of change: A comparative analysis of social entrepreneurship processes in emerging markets. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 157, n. March, p. 120067, 2020.

ROWLEY, J. Conducting research interviews. **Management Research Review**, v. 35, n. 3–4, p. 260–271, 2012.

SAEBI, T.; FOSS, N. J.; LINDER, S. Social Entrepreneurship Research: Past Achievements and Future Promises. **Journal of Management**, v. 45, n. 1, p. 70–95, 2019.

- SAHASRANAMAM, S.; NANDAKUMAR, M. K. Individual capital and social entrepreneurship: Role of formal institutions. **Journal of Business Research**, v. 107, n. April 2018, p. 104–117, 2020.
- SANTANGELO, G. D.; MEYER, K. E. Extending the internationalization process model: Increases and decreases of MNE commitment in emerging economies. **Journal of International Business Studies**, v. 42, n. 7, p. 894–909, 2011.
- SANTOS, J. A. Dos; MOURA-LEITE, R.; PEREIRA, M. W. G.; PAGÁN, M. Social and environmental disclosure of the largest companies in Brazil's agribusiness sector. **Social Responsibility Journal**, v. 17, n. 8, p. 1009–1027, 2021.
- SAVARESE, C.; HUYBRECHTS, B.; HUDON, M. The Influence of Interorganizational Collaboration on Logic Conciliation and Tensions Within Hybrid Organizations: Insights from Social Enterprise–Corporate Collaborations. **Journal of Business Ethics**, v. 173, n. 4, p. 709–721, 2 nov. 2021.
- SCHÄFER, M.; DANTAS DE FIGUEIREDO, M.; IRAN, S.; JAEGER-ERBEN, M.; SILVA, M. E.; LAZARO, J. C.; MEIßNER, M. Imitation, adaptation, or local emergency? – A cross-country comparison of social innovations for sustainable consumption in Brazil, Germany, and Iran. **Journal of Cleaner Production**, v. 284, p. 124740, 2021.
- SCHEUERLE, T.; SCHMITZ, B. Inhibiting Factors of Scaling up the Impact of Social Entrepreneurial Organizations – A Comprehensive Framework and Empirical Results for Germany. **Journal of Social Entrepreneurship**, v. 7, n. 2, p. 127–161, 3 maio 2016.
- SCHNEGG, M.; LINKE, T. Living institutions: Sharing and sanctioning water among pastoralists in Namibia. **World Development**, v. 68, p. 205–214, 2015.
- SCOTT, W. R. **Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities**. [s.l.] Sage Publications, 1995.
- SCOTT, W. R. Approaching adulthood: The maturing of institutional theory. **Theory and Society**, v. 37, n. 5, p. 427–442, 2008.
- SILVA, L. do N.; LAZARO, J. C.; TEIXEIRA, L. I. L. Semeando Mudanças e Criando Valor Social: O Empreendedorismo Social como Motor de Desenvolvimento em Vazios Institucionais. Em: Proceedings of XLVIII Encontro da ANPAD , 2024, [...]. 2024. p. 1–23.
- SIMONS, H. **Case study research in practice**. London: Sage Publications, 2009.
- SIQUEIRA, E. H. da S.; BIN, A.; STEFANUTO, R. C. Measuring impacts of social enterprises: perspectives from Brazilians entrepreneurs and investors. **Social Enterprise Journal**, v. 17, n. 4, p. 527–547, 4 out. 2021.
- SONG, C.; WANG, E. L. Understanding regional growth of social enterprises: the art of the state. **Management Decision**, v. 62, n. 3, p. 986–1007, 16 abr. 2024.
- SOUZA, A. C. A. A. de; LESSA, B. de S.; LÁZARO DA SILVA FILHO, J. C. Social innovation and the promotion of local economic development. **Innovation and Management Review**, v. 16, n. 1, p. 55–71, 2019.

SPANUTH, A.; URBANO, D. Exploring social enterprise legitimacy within ecosystems from an institutional approach: A systematic literature review and research agenda. **International Journal of Management Reviews**, v. 26, n. 2, p. 211–231, 28 abr. 2024.

SPIETH, P.; SCHNEIDER, S.; CLAUB, T.; EICHENBERG, D. Value drivers of social businesses: A business model perspective. **Long Range Planning**, v. 52, n. 3, p. 427–444, 2019.

STEPHAN, U.; UHLANER, L. M.; STRIDE, C. Institutions and social entrepreneurship: The role of institutional voids, institutional support, and institutional configurations. **Journal of International Business Studies**, v. 46, n. 3, p. 308–331, 2015a.

STEPHAN, U.; UHLANER, L. M.; STRIDE, C. Institutions and social entrepreneurship: The role of institutional voids, institutional support, and institutional configurations. **Journal of International Business Studies**, v. 46, n. 3, p. 308–331, 2015b.

SYDOW, A.; CANNATELLI, B. L.; GIUDICI, A.; MOLTENI, M. Entrepreneurial Workaround Practices in Severe Institutional Voids: Evidence From Kenya. **Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice**, v. 46, n. 2, p. 331–367, 2022a.

SYDOW, A.; CANNATELLI, B. L.; GIUDICI, A.; MOLTENI, M. Entrepreneurial Workaround Practices in Severe Institutional Voids: Evidence From Kenya. **Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice**, v. 46, n. 2, p. 331–367, 2022b.

TESTI, E.; BELLUCCI, M.; FRANCHI, S.; BIGGERI, M. Italian Social Enterprises at the Crossroads: Their Role in the Evolution of the Welfare State. **VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations**, v. 28, n. 6, p. 2403–2422, 9 dez. 2017.

THERESE HACKETT, M. Challenging social enterprise debates in Bangladesh. **Social Enterprise Journal**, v. 6, n. 3, p. 210–224, 16 nov. 2010.

TORRES, P.; AUGUSTO, M. Digitalisation, social entrepreneurship and national well-being. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 161, n. August, p. 120279, 2020a. Disponível em: <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120279>>.

TORRES, P.; AUGUSTO, M. Digitalisation, social entrepreneurship and national well-being. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 161, p. 120279, dez. 2020b.

TOSON, S. J. Renewed hope for the low-profit limited liability company. **Society and Business Review**, v. 13, n. 1, p. 100–111, 12 fev. 2018.

TRAN, M.; BEDDEWELA, E. Does context matter for sustainability disclosure? Institutional factors in Southeast Asia. **Business Ethics**, v. 29, n. 2, p. 282–302, 2020.

TURKER, D.; ALTUNTAS VURAL, C. Embedding social innovation process into the institutional context: Voids or supports. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 119, p. 98–113, 2017a.

TURKER, D.; ALTUNTAS VURAL, C. Embedding social innovation process into the institutional context: Voids or supports. **Technological Forecasting and Social Change**, v. 119, p. 98–113, 2017b.

- VASCONCELLOS, E. F.; LESO, B. H.; CORTIMIGLIA, M. N. Challenges and opportunities for social entrepreneurs in civil engineering in Brazil. **International Journal of Organizational Analysis**, v. 30, n. 3, p. 638–651, 18 abr. 2022.
- VIRMANI, A.; LÉPINEUX, F. Aravind Eye Care System as Transformational Entrepreneurship: Spiritual Roots, Multi-Dimensional Impact. **Philosophy of Management**, v. 15, n. 1, p. 83–94, 13 fev. 2016.
- WANYOIKE, C. N.; MASENO, M. Exploring the motivation of social entrepreneurs in creating successful social enterprises in East Africa. **New England Journal of Entrepreneurship**, v. 24, n. 2, p. 79–104, 8 nov. 2021.
- WEBB, J. W.; KHOURY, T. A.; HITT, M. A. The Influence of Formal and Informal Institutional Voids on Entrepreneurship. **Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice**, v. 44, n. 3, p. 504–526, 2020.
- WEBB, J. W.; KISTRUCK, G. M.; IRELAND, R. D.; KETCHEN, D. J. The entrepreneurship process in base of the pyramid markets: The case of multinational enterprise/nongovernment organization alliances. **Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice**, v. 34, n. 3, p. 555–581, 2010.
- WELTER, C. V. do N.; BICHUETI, R. S.; CAMPOS, S. A. P.; SAUSEN, J. F. C. L.; BAGGIO, D. K. Propulsores da Mudança Institucional: Uma Discussão Acerca da Inovação Social, Empreendedorismo Institucional e Poder de Agência do Empreendedor. **Revista de Administração IMED**, v. 11, n. 2, p. 153–173, 2021.
- WU, J.; CAI, W.; SONG, Y. Determinants of social enterprise performance: The role of passion, competence, and organizational legitimacy. **Nonprofit Management and Leadership**, v. 33, n. 4, p. 807–834, jun. 2023.
- WU, J.; SI, S.; YAN, H. Reducing poverty through the shared economy: creating inclusive entrepreneurship around institutional voids in China. **Asian Business and Management**, v. 21, n. 2, p. 155–183, 2022.
- XIAO, Y. Pathways to scaling up in emerging economies: A configurational analysis of organizational capabilities in social enterprises. **Journal of Business Research**, v. 189, p. 115091, fev. 2025.
- XING, Z.; FANG, D.; WANG, J.; ZHANG, L. How does institutional theory illuminate the influence of the digital economy on R&D networks?. **European Journal of Innovation Management**, v. 28, n. 8, p. 3418–3439, 2025.
- YIN, R. K. **Qualitative Research from Start to Finish**. London: The Guilford Press, 2016. 1–98 p.
- YU, C.; YE, B.; MA, S. Creating for others: linking prosocial motivation and social entrepreneurship intentions. **Management Decision**, v. 59, n. 11, p. 2755–2773, 29 out. 2021.
- YUNUS, M.; MOINGEON, B.; LEHMANN-ORTEGA, L. Building Social Business Models: Lessons from the Grameen Experience. **Long Range Planning**, v. 43, n. 2–3, p. 308–325, abr. 2010.

ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, I.; LUDVIG, A.; HOGL, K. Social innovation to sustain rural communities: Overcoming institutional challenges in Serbia. **Sustainability (Switzerland)**, v. 11, n. 24, 2019a.

ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, I.; LUDVIG, A.; HOGL, K. Social innovation to sustain rural communities: Overcoming institutional challenges in Serbia. **Sustainability (Switzerland)**, v. 11, n. 24, 2019b.

APPENDIX 1 - INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Título do Projeto: Estudo da atuação e dinâmica das relações entre atores de ecossistemas de empresas sociais: iniciativas e ações para apoio e impulsionamento desses negócios.

Pesquisador/a responsável: Dra. Andréa Paula Segatto

Pesquisador/a assistente: Alan Bandeira Pinheiro

Local da Pesquisa: Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração – Universidade Federal do Paraná (PPGADM UFPR). Endereço: Avenida Prefeito Lothario Meissner, Jardim Botânico. CEP: 80210170 - Curitiba, PR – Brasil. Telefone: (41) 3360-4485.

Você está sendo convidado/a a participar de uma pesquisa. Este documento, chamado “Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido” visa assegurar seus direitos como participante da pesquisa. Por favor, leia com atenção e calma, aproveitando para esclarecer suas dúvidas. Se houver perguntas antes ou mesmo depois de assiná-lo, você poderá esclarecê-las com o pesquisador. Você é livre para decidir participar e pode desistir a qualquer momento sem que isto lhe traga prejuízo algum.

A pesquisa intitulada “Estudo da atuação e dinâmica das relações entre atores de ecossistemas de empresas sociais: iniciativas e ações para apoio e impulsionamento desses negócios” e seu subprojeto “VOZES NÃO OUVIDAS: O PAPEL DOS VAZIOS INSTITUCIONAIS NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DAS EMPRESAS SOCIAIS”, tem por objetivo compreender o papel dos vazios institucionais na criação e desenvolvimento de empresas sociais. A pesquisa de campo ocorrerá durante o ano de 2025.

Participando do estudo você está sendo convidado/a a ser entrevistado por, no máximo, duas horas, de maneira presencial ou remota, a ser gravada em áudio e vídeo. A entrevista será realizada em local, dia e horário combinados previamente. A equipe de pesquisa compromete-se no armazenamento sigiloso e cuidadoso dos dados e garante e que serão mantidos sob guarda pelo período de cinco anos após o término da pesquisa.

Desconfortos e riscos: Os desconfortos possíveis desta entrevista podem ser enquadrados com a invasão da privacidade e a tomada de tempo. O participante corre o risco da perda de sua integridade ao revelar pensamentos e sentimentos nunca revelados. Por isso, você pode desistir a qualquer momento desta pesquisa. Garante-se o sigilo, pois os dados necessários para esta pesquisa não poderão traçar um perfil que evidencia seu cotidiano.

Os dados obtidos para este estudo serão utilizados unicamente para essa pesquisa e armazenados pelo período de cinco anos após o término da pesquisa, sob responsabilidade do (s) pesquisador (es) responsável (is) (Resol. 466/2012 e 510/2016).

Sigilo e privacidade: Você tem a garantia de que sua identidade será mantida em sigilo e nenhuma informação será dada a outras pessoas que não façam parte da equipe de pesquisadores. Na divulgação dos resultados desse estudo, seu nome não será citado.

() Permito a gravação de imagem, som de voz e/ou depoimentos unicamente para esta pesquisa e tenho ciência que a guarda dos dados são de responsabilidade do(s) pesquisador(es), que se compromete(m) em garantir o sigilo e privacidade dos dados.

() Não permito a gravação de imagem, som de voz e/ou depoimentos para esta pesquisa.

Ressarcimento e Indenização: Os pesquisadores irão agendar um encontro remoto com aos participantes, no local, horário e dia combinados, por isso não existirá o ressarcimento de despesas. De qualquer forma, caso o participante julgue que sofreu algum tipo de dano consequente desta pesquisa, este tem direito a assistência e a busca pela indenização.

Contato: Em caso de dúvidas sobre a pesquisa, você poderá entrar em contato com os pesquisadores, que possuem como endereço profissional: Universidade Federal do Paraná, Departamento de Administração. Avenida Prefeito Lothario Meissner, Jardim Botânico. CEP: 80210170 - Curitiba, PR – Brasil. Telefone: (41) 3360-4485.

Em caso de denúncias ou reclamações sobre sua participação e sobre questões éticas do estudo, você poderá entrar em contato com a secretaria do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa em Ciências Humanas e Sociais do Setor de Ciências Humanas (CEP/CHS) da Universidade Federal do Paraná, rua General Carneiro, 460 – Edifício D. Pedro I – 11º andar, sala 1121, Curitiba – Paraná ou pelo e-mail cep_chs@ufpr.br.

O Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa (CEP): O papel do CEP é avaliar e acompanhar os aspectos éticos de todas as pesquisas envolvendo seres humanos. A Comissão Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa (CONEP), tem por objetivo desenvolver a regulamentação sobre proteção dos seres humanos envolvidos nas pesquisas. Desempenha um papel coordenador da rede de Comitês de Ética em Pesquisa (CEPs) das instituições, além de assumir a função de órgão consultor na área de ética em pesquisas.

Este documento é elaborado em duas vias, assinadas e rubricadas pelo/a pesquisador/a e pelo/a participante, sendo que uma via deverá ficar com você e outra com o/a pesquisador/a.

Esta pesquisa foi submetida ao Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa com seres humanos da UFPR sob o número CAAE nº 66310122.5.0000.0214 e aprovada com o Parecer número No. 5.897.34 emitido em Outubro de 2025.

Consentimento livre e esclarecido: Após ter lido este documento com informações sobre a pesquisa e não tendo dúvidas informo que aceito participar.

Nome do/a participante da pesquisa:

(Assinatura do/a participante da pesquisa)

Data: ____ / ____ / ____.

APPENDIX 2 – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE APPLIED TO MANAGERS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Estimated interview time: 60 minutes

Before the interview, the respondents will be asked to confirm orally (recorded) their consent to the recording of the interview.

We will use the funnel technique, starting with general questions followed by more specific questions to gradually lead the respondent to the topic of this study: institutional voids and social innovation in Brazilian context.

PART A : General questions

1. Could you tell me a little bit about your background?
2. Did you have previous work experience before you launched your business? In which areas?
3. How did you get the idea for your venture?
4. What kind of objectives does your venture have?
5. Did you plan this business carefully or did it come to being spontaneously? (how did the business emerge?)

PART B: Questions about your business

6. What are your main partnerships? Are they important? Why? How?
7. Do you consider your business innovative? In what ways?
8. Are there many other businesses offering the same thing as yours?
9. Who makes decisions in your company (you yourself or do you have a team)?
10. To what kind of needs do you think you respond?
11. What are the direct and indirect outputs of your business?
12. Who is affected (a little bit, moderately, strongly) by your business? Can you estimate the impact of your business on these constituents?
13. Do you think your business has a social role? If so, how does it contribute to the community?

PART C: Questions about business impact and institutional voids

14. What makes running your business difficult?
15. Can you give me examples of how these disturbances affect your business?
16. What actions do you undertake to deal with these difficulties? (or How do you face these difficulties?)

17. Do you have any relationships with local or regional authorities? If so, what kind of relationships do you have?
18. How is your business' relationship with the laws, regulations?
19. Do you believe that government support is important for the development of your business?
20. How do you evaluate regulatory efficiency? Do you think it is weak or strong?
21. How does the regulatory efficiency affect your business?
22. Is the government or national agencies helping social enterprises in Brazil?
23. How do you think that the government or national agencies can help social enterprises in Brazil?
24. And how can social enterprises assist the government in developing policies and regulations?
25. Do you think social issues (sexism, social exclusion, racism, and people's unethical behavior) interfere with the development of your business?
26. Can you give me examples of how these social issues affect your business?
27. How does your business deal with social issues such as sexism, social exclusion, racism, and people's unethical behavior?
28. Do you think that without the existence of these social problems, your business would exist?

PART D: Final question

29. Do you have plans for the future with your social business? What are your plans?

APPENDIX 3 - CODES FOR EACH SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Appendix A – Institutional voids affecting the development of company A

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
"The challenge is the stigma of the neighborhood... Sometimes people will hire a buffet, they want the buffet in the upscale area..." (A1)	Neighborhood stigmatization; absence of policies valuing vulnerable territories	Social and cultural exclusion
"I have to adapt to the market because people are not used to seeing vulnerable populations in prominent roles." (A1)	Lack of public and cultural inclusion policies for marginalized groups	Social and cultural exclusion
"There is territorial racism because of a neighborhood, a certain area, because they know that Bom Jardim has sanitation problems, flooded streets, but not everywhere, but people already imagine that we are perhaps cooking under a shed and are taking unhygienic food." (A1)	Neighborhood stigmatization	Social and cultural exclusion
"Instability in the political and economic environment affects our costs directly... if prices increase, people will prefer to make events at home." (A1)	Macro-level instability constrains pricing and demand	Political and economic instability
"We're in a highly vulnerable neighborhood, right? People have completely misconceptions about us. The other day, a customer asked if we had glass cups." (A2)	Neighborhood stigmatization	Social and cultural exclusion
"The tax burden is extremely high and unviable for us, especially because we are a social enterprise. It makes no sense for us to operate under the same legal system as other companies." (A2)	Excessive taxation reduces resources available for social reinvestment	Inadequate legal frameworks
"The little profit we make, which is directed towards marginalized populations, if it goes to the government due to the tax burden, it makes no sense for us to continue [the business]. So, I'm in favor of laws that benefit us." (A2)	Excessive taxation	Inadequate legal frameworks

Appendix B – Institutional voids affecting the development of company B

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
"We have very little public investment policies, right? We don't have much support. We don't have public policies that support us in this matter of transforming lives." (B1)	Lack of governmental incentives and policy frameworks for social enterprises	Inefficient public policies
"I really missed the government, this structural issue, right? Having a law that supported our work, that took us by the hand, even the administrative aspect of our social business, right? I really missed it." (B1)	Absence of formal legal recognition and administrative support for hybrid models	Inadequate legal frameworks
[At the beginning of the business] "people always associated my product with trash, the community itself devalued this product." (B1)	Social stigma and devaluation of community-based entrepreneurship	Social and cultural exclusion

<p>'We come from a family background where we were raised, we don't know how to handle money, dealing with financial matters is something I've never known, something we have to learn the hard way. Then a crisis happens, as we're already seeing, right? This impact happens directly.' (B1)</p>	<p>Limited access to financial education and business literacy in vulnerable areas</p>	<p>Weakened educational system</p>
<p>"This development department [of Fortaleza City Hall] should be more involved in the peripheral territories, where this work takes place, right? The State and the city hall are very important." (B1)</p>	<p>Weak engagement of public development agencies in peripheral territories</p>	<p>Inefficient public policies</p>
<p>'If it had government support it would be much better, it's a company as I just told you, it's a beautiful project, it's a project that will help the environment, help women in the outskirts who are in need.' (B2)</p>	<p>Underrepresentation of social projects in public support programs</p>	<p>Inefficient public policies</p>
<p>'We needed to reach them [politicians] because generally they don't see the problems in the outskirts, they don't see them because they don't live here.' (B2)</p>	<p>Distance between policymakers and realities of marginalized areas</p>	<p>Lack of political representation</p>
<p>'There in Aldeota [an elite neighborhood], when we arrive, people look us up and down, it seems like we come from the slave quarters, I don't know, from prison, because people look at us differently, you know?' (B2)</p>	<p>Territorial and class-based discrimination affecting social mobility</p>	<p>Social and cultural exclusion</p>

Appendix C – Institutional voids affecting the development of company C

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
<p>[In government terms], "It's not just about providing resources, it's not just about having an incubation or acceleration program, but about teaching entrepreneurship. It's very difficult. We don't have this culture, perhaps as Brazilians, and we also don't learn this in college." (C1)</p>	<p>Limited access to entrepreneurship education</p>	<p>Weakened educational system</p>
<p>'We had to redo our brand creation and registration process. I had no idea you had to think about so many things at once when you're starting a business. This is one criticism I have of the system: creating a brand and owning it shouldn't be so time-consuming and difficult.' (C1)</p>	<p>Complex and time-consuming bureaucratic procedures for business formalization</p>	<p>Excessive bureaucracy</p>
<p>'The clearer the laws and requirements for a company to operate, the easier it is for everyone. We're a company like any other; we're not an NGO, and we don't work directly with the government.' (C1)</p>	<p>Lack of clarity and adaptability in legal structures for hybrid organizations</p>	<p>Inadequate legal frameworks</p>
<p>'The government could support more, because these impact businesses do at the frontline what the government can't. And if the government were to try, the expense would be much higher and the results much less efficient. So, the big advantage of impact businesses is precisely that they deliver the benefits to the frontline.' (C1)</p>	<p>Weak governmental recognition of the societal role of impact enterprises</p>	<p>Lack of political representation</p>

'The company did not benefit from any law aimed at anything specific to the environmental area, from the city hall or the state. I believe that it is really seen as a common company, it pays taxes like any other company." (C2)	Absence of differentiated legal or fiscal treatment for environmental social enterprises	Inadequate legal frameworks
'We don't have a public administration that truly disseminates, promotes, and encourages the consumption of environmental products and services; we're going against the grain. We need public administration aligned and synchronized with what's being developed in this area." (C3)	Lack of alignment between public administration and sustainability agendas	Lack of political representation

Appendix D – Institutional voids affecting the development of company D

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
[In the beginning] "I had excessive bureaucracy, because when I established my business model, I operated with a logistics service that was performed by me. So, even though I was bringing all these benefits to society, to the public coffers and to nature, there was no one looking to support the difference in our delivery." (D1)	Complex and time-consuming bureaucratic procedures for business formalization	Excessive bureaucracy
'Unfortunately, we're just a regular company in the market. In terms of taxation and the government, we're not yet seen as a social enterprise." (D1)	Absence of differentiated legal or fiscal frameworks for social companies	Lack of political representation
'It's bureaucratic working with the government [...]. Because, ultimately, within the Brazilian market, in any state, there's corruption and a very difficult-to-break structure within the country's waste system, right? So, for many, trash is waste, but for others, trash is a dispute." (D1)	Entrenched corruption and structural inefficiencies in public administration	Corruption
'Regulatory inefficiency can delay projects, discourage investment, and make it difficult to formalize these partnerships, right? This is because, despite significant advances in Brazilian legislation, there are still few practical incentives." (D2)	Lack of effective implementation of environmental legislation	Inadequate legal frameworks
'Extremely high taxes, excessive charges, right? So, they operate like a normal company, right? A normal company in Brazil. Not to mention the challenges of day-to-day operations, the bureaucracy of opening doors."(D3)	Heavy taxation and procedural rigidity constraining operational efficiency	Inadequate legal frameworks and excessive bureaucracy

Appendix E – Institutional voids affecting the development of company E

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'Because the government has several policies, but it can't support small businesses, because the rules are all so bureaucratic that it can't close a partnership, you know, about investment." (E1)	Rigid and complex administrative procedures	Excessive bureaucracy
'I think that the lack of public policies in the favelas can directly affect business." (E1)	Absence of tailored local policies	Inefficient public policies

<p>'If we have new laws that reduce bureaucracy, so that small businesses can also form partnerships with the government, it would be important. This would be interesting, because [the government] can't ask for the same documentation for a small company as for a large, 50-year-old company." (E1)</p>	<p>Regulatory barriers to small business inclusion</p>	<p>Excessive bureaucracy</p>
<p>'So, young people who leave high school leave without any skills, no technical knowledge for their first job, and they feel lost. So, if we can offer them professional training, they'll certainly be able to access these positions and go on to work." (E1)</p>	<p>Lack of professional and vocational training</p>	<p>Weakened educational system</p>
<p>'The lack of public policies, right? It directly affects people's participation in our work." (E2)</p>	<p>Limited state presence in peripheral areas</p>	<p>Inefficient public policies</p>
<p>'I think that these current laws could be a little more flexible for companies like us, which are small businesses, which operate in the community and many do not understand these laws or are unable to seek funding through the government, due to the requirements they ask for." (E2)</p>	<p>Legal inaccessibility for marginalized entrepreneurs</p>	<p>Inadequate legal frameworks</p>
<p>'We've actually had this discrimination against our candidates based on appearance, and the appearance I'm talking about isn't about fatphobia or anything like that, but about the lifestyle a person adopts, right? Colored hair, tattoos, coming from the favela. So I believe it still has a huge impact on candidates and companies." (E2)</p>	<p>Prejudice based on social and spatial identity</p>	<p>Social and cultural exclusion</p>
<p>'And really, there is prejudice, "Oh, you live in this neighborhood, so you are this", you know? "Oh, so-and-so lives there?" With me it was like, "Don't mess with her, because she's from Paraisópolis [a peripheral neighborhood]", another said "Who has the courage to go there?"."(E3)</p>	<p>Territorial stigma and social stereotyping</p>	<p>Social and cultural exclusion</p>

Appendix F – Institutional voids affecting the development of company F

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
<p>'Initially, we were very afraid of accessing public resources; we wanted to understand where the information was. In meetings with other social enterprises, we even joke that people in the periphery are taught to be afraid of money." (F1)</p>	<p>Lack of access to information and institutional mistrust regarding public resources</p>	<p>Weakened educational system and social and cultural exclusion</p>
<p>'When it [public resources] arrive, it's so paperless, so demanding, that it's scary to access. It's scary about public policy. People think, "I'm going to get into trouble." We know how to do business, create products and services, but not how to manage them." (F1)</p>	<p>Complexity and opacity in bureaucratic processes</p>	<p>Excessive bureaucracy and weakened educational system</p>

'I'm an impact business. How do I do it? First, we started operating, and then we opened the company. Then we asked, "So, how do we open it? What do we open?" And we saw in practice that no one [at the São Paulo City Hall] knew anything." (F1)	Absence of clear guidance for social business formalization	Inadequate legal frameworks
'Regarding government support, I'm not just talking about financial support, but also about qualifications and information." (F2)	Lack of technical and educational support from public authorities	Weakened educational system
'The administrations don't talk to each other, the departments don't talk to each other, and we're left trying to navigate this ocean of uncertainty that is currently here." (F2)	Fragmented and uncoordinated public administration	Inadequate legal frameworks and excessive bureaucracy
'The idea is that they [public policies] can look at people from the outskirts who produce, who do cool things. I, in my public school days, didn't have that. So I couldn't see myself in anyone; we [who come from the favela] have been discredited our entire lives." (F3)	Territorial stigma and lack of representation of marginalized groups in public policy	Social and cultural exclusion

Appendix G – Institutional voids affecting the development of company G

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'We fight to have public policy, not only for ourselves, but for any social impact project, for any renewable energy." (G1)	Struggle for inclusion in public policy agendas	Lack of political representation
'I see the government's role very much not as a responsibility to encourage one specific sector or another, but as a responsibility to not get in the way." (G2)	Absence of proactive governmental engagement with social enterprises	Inefficient public policies
'I look at the company's economic and financial aspects as a whole. And every day I have to pay more taxes. It hurts, doesn't it? So I actually feel a lack of benefits from having a social mission. Not just looking at the environmental aspect, right? Looking at the bigger picture, incentives for small businesses are almost non-existent." (G2)	Lack of fiscal incentives and institutional recognition for social missions	Inadequate legal frameworks
'In a more developed country, where people are in a better financial situation, they could certainly choose. 'I'll pay a little more, but I'll get a product that's less damaging to the planet, right?' Then, certainly, the more developed country would be helping our market." (G2)	Limited consumer awareness and economic issues	Restricted purchasing power
'There's no effective communication between the government and these social enterprises. Within the government, corruption is still very prevalent here in Brazil. Corruption goes beyond the limits of our desire for prosperity. (G3)"	Institutional opacity and mistrust due to corruption	Lack of political representation and corruption
'We don't have continuity in public policies because there are so many changes in government. Every two or four years, all agencies undergo structural changes." (G3)	Discontinuity of policies and political instability	Governance fragility

Appendix H – Institutional voids affecting the development of company H

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'The company structure is small and you don't get any benefit from anything, absolutely nothing.' (H1)	Limited institutional support and access to development mechanisms	Inadequate legal frameworks
'Government and state initiatives for social programs that benefit these entrepreneurs—to be honest, I've never heard of them. I don't think they're even interested. Here, you only get tax exemptions if you do some work for the government, make a donation, help a public agency, or renovate a square.' (H1)	Absence of consistent public policies and instrumental engagement with social enterprises	Lack of political representation and inadequate legal frameworks
'Because when the government changes, the purposes change. So I have a four-year deadline. You'll have government agencies that will try to create public policies to encourage social enterprises, and then [a few years later] they're gone.' (H1)	Discontinuity of government programs and instability in institutional agendas	Governance fragility
'Brazil is very prejudiced against this [social enterprise managers]. People think that if a manager isn't wearing a suit, they probably shouldn't be respected. I find that a bit ridiculous.' (H1)	Social stigma and lack of legitimacy toward alternative business models	Social and cultural exclusion
'From the moment we put something out, some post defending a value, whether it was about LGBT or left-wing issues, we felt a backlash from people who said they liked [the brand] but wouldn't buy it anymore. There was minimal retaliation.' (H2)	Reputational risks associated with social advocacy and political polarization	Social resistance
'So, there's a lack of incentives for tax exemptions, so that he [the company owner] can export, so that this product is also valued abroad, right? So, it's a policy that's already more common in China, not only for large companies, but also for small ones.' (H2)	Absence of fiscal instruments to support market expansion and competitiveness	Inadequate legal frameworks
'Besides being much more difficult because it's head-to-head with traditional companies, it's even difficult to get a bank loan. There's no incentive whatsoever, and in some ways, there's even sabotage.' (H3)	Structural barriers to financial access and unequal competition with conventional firms	Inadequate legal frameworks

Appendix I - Company A mitigating institutional voids

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
"Our buffet, its purpose is to solve a social problem which was the lack of opportunity and income generation. The buffet is made up only of women and the LGBT population, right? Even people joke that it's prejudice against white straight men, but it's not, because we have to give opportunities to those who don't have them." (A1)	Empowerment of marginalized groups	Social inclusion

'But there are people here [at the social enterprise] who arrived with suicide attempts and today they take care of themselves. Today they work, today they have their own money, they started college, they went back to school, right? Our company pays 50% of the college tuition for those who work here.' (A1)	Personal transformation and skill development	Social inclusion
Last year, we had \$65,000 in sales. That's still a small amount, right? But selling \$65,000 in a social enterprise in a peripheral neighborhood. Almost \$30,000 circulated within our neighborhood, which went into these people's accounts. Plus, another \$15,000 in purchases made at local businesses, so that it stays here generating income and everyone benefits.' (A1)	Local economic development	Local economic strengthening
'This ends up being a great opportunity for them, as they previously depended on their husbands' salaries, and it brings benefits to mothers, housewives, and entrepreneurs, to have this feeling of usefulness.' (A2)	Social and economic empowerment for women	Job creation and economic autonomy
'If these governments had the same vision we have today, of food with a purpose, of providing opportunities for women in socially vulnerable situations, for people who normally don't have opportunities, if they recognized that this process is an important process and could give us the chance to be recognized.' (A2)	Empowerment of marginalized groups	Social inclusion
'Many women come in with depression, learn to cook as therapy, and then manage to make a career out of it.' (A3)	Healing and professional growth	Job creation and economic autonomy
'Avoiding disposable plastic, taking care with packaging, presentation, and everything else. So I think it's a business that can track the entire production chain and ensure that the negative impact is minimized.' (A3)	Environmental responsibility	Responsible production

Appendix J - Company B mitigating institutional voids

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'We directly impact financially the lives of these women from the outskirts, right? Because we become stronger from the moment I place an order with a company. This order from this company will strengthen this woman, because she will have work to deliver and will have to receive.' (B1)	Economic empowerment of women in peripheral areas	Job creation and economic autonomy
'One of the seamstresses only made blonde dolls, but after a conversation, she started making black dolls, and they're beautiful. But she didn't identify as a black woman, and you see how social factors are at play, things from your childhood that you carry with you.' (B1)	Racial identity awareness and cultural transformation	Reduction of racial prejudice

'Materials that would otherwise become trash and would take a long time to break down in nature. So, I think the environmental impact of not letting them go to waste is very significant, you know?' (B2)	Environmental awareness and sustainable production	Responsible production
'When we consume this type of product, we are having a bit of environmental awareness of consuming something that is beneficial to the environment because they use these fabrics that are recyclable, anyway, and also the workers themselves, right? Because they will have their income, they will have a way to support themselves, also due to the issues of the community being more needy.' (B3)	Sustainable production and opportunities for people in the community	Responsible production and local economic strengthening
'In the [social] enterprise, there are economic issues, because it will provide employment, being in a peripheral location. So unemployed women who return to work are beneficiaries.' (B3)	Reducing economic exclusion in peripheral regions	Job creation and economic autonomy

Appendix K - Company C mitigating institutional voids

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'Having more sustainable business options is a huge differentiator. I think we've managed to reduce the mortality rate of sustainable businesses.' (C1)	Strengthening the viability and competitiveness of sustainable ventures	Local economic strengthening
'Indirectly, we are working on environmental education, promoting these different sustainable products and services [through the platform], expanding horizons and creating a deeper collective awareness about sustainability.' (C1)	Promoting environmental education and collective awareness	Environmental awareness
'There we simply have a connection through the platform and it allows companies that have this ecological and even sustainable interest to work together, even if on different fronts.' (C2)	Creating collaboration networks among sustainable businesses	Ecosystem building
'So, the owner had the idea of creating the platform due to the lack, in fact, of a cataloged market for sustainable things.' (C2)	Addressing information gaps and market visibility for sustainable products	Market intermediation
'The platform ensures that products and services have a social impact before registering. For example, our company only works with seamstresses from underserved communities.' (C3)	Ensuring social inclusion and fair work practices in the value chain	Responsible production
'The platform promotes environmental education. People understand that it's possible to find services and products in this area. People don't know it exists, and when they don't know it exists, they don't pursue it, they don't pay attention.' (C3)	Raising consumer awareness about sustainable alternatives	Environmental awareness

Appendix L - Company D mitigating institutional voids

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'I work to change people's mindsets and behaviors regarding the separation and reuse of waste, as well as to increase recognition of the work of recyclable material collectors." (D1)	Promoting behavioral change and social recognition of waste collectors	Environmental awareness
'We make this waste gain value again, right? It regains economic, social, and environmental value because it becomes raw material again. So, waste is diverted from landfills, dumps, and incinerators, right? [...] For example, the closure of landfills, which has been planned since 2010. We're already in 2025, and we still have over 3,000 open-air dumps in Brazil. We're pushing forward the agenda for their closure." (D1)	Transforming waste into economic and environmental value through circular practices	Responsible production
'The company was born out of an urgent need to address the waste challenge in our country. And through responsible, inclusive, and efficient solid waste management, we seek to address gaps in reverse logistics, the disposal of recyclable materials, and the composting of organic waste." (D2)	Filling institutional and infrastructural gaps in solid waste management and reverse logistics	Responsible production
'An indirect impact is the generation of income for cooperatives, providing dignity and appreciation for these professionals." (D2)	Promoting socioeconomic inclusion and fair income for waste collectors	Economic autonomy
'The company plays a fundamental social role and contributes directly to the community. They introduced us to the waste pickers' association, for example, which we didn't have access to. We learned about the donation of our electronic waste for sustainable collection through the company." (D3)	Facilitating social connections and access to recycling networks	Environmental awareness and market intermediation

Appendix M - Company E mitigating institutional voids

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'We are located in the favelas, where sometimes opportunities don't come. So we can be inside the favela, we can bring opportunities." (E1)	Expanding access to employment opportunities in underserved territories	Job creation and local economic strengthening
'We already employ over 3,700 people, and our goal is to employ 40 people per month and train 120 others. So, we've been training a lot of people to achieve these goals. With training, they have a better chance of getting a job, right?" (E1)	Enhancing employability through training and workforce development	Job creation
'We have a charity clothing store that donates formal clothes for people to wear to job interviews. We sometimes donate transportation for them to get to the job interview. We offer training, and all services are completely free. So there's no cost to our candidates. Private companies pay for the costs." (E1)	Reducing access barriers to employment and supporting professional integration	Social inclusion

'And we have a very serious situation, with prejudice against people who live in communities. We know that prejudice against Black people still exists, so our biggest focus is to break down these barriers between the candidate and the company.' (E2)	Challenging discrimination and promoting equal access to formal labor markets	Reduction of racial prejudice
'And I think that [social enterprise] changes lives, because I always asked to be in an environment, like an office, a place where I sit like I am now with you, a quieter place that isn't noisy, that doesn't have a lot of people looking at me all the time, so I think it changes, it does change lives, right?' (E3)	Promoting dignity, self-esteem, and transformation through access to decent work	Social inclusion

Appendix N - Company F mitigating institutional voids

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'It's not just about producing food, it's about thinking about health and well-being, it's about generating income, it's about gender equality, it's about thinking about all of this, not just to improve the development of the place where we are.' (F1)	Promoting holistic community development through income generation, health, and gender equality	Social inclusion, and local economic strengthening
'There's also an impact on people's access to these agroecological practices. Many don't have a place to learn about agroecology or environmental education in practice, and here they have that access.' (F1)	Expanding access to agroecological knowledge and environmental education	Environmental awareness
'If you want to live here [in the favela], you have to think about the development here. I think we are completely conditioned by the discomforts of what was bad for us, by the lack of access to organic food for the population here.' (F1)	Addressing food insecurity and promoting local sustainable food systems	Responsible production
'In addition to producing organic food, we also do outdoor activities, at fairs and schools. A while ago, about a month ago, we were at a school here in the nearby suburbs, where we held a seedling production workshop for a group of 5-year-olds.' (F2)	Encouraging environmental awareness and sustainability education for the community	Environmental awareness
'This positive impact demonstrates that we too produce, that we can grow our own quality food, even in marginalized territories, often seen as places where nothing grows. There, we see incredibly high-quality produce that simultaneously nourishes and educates.' (F3)	Empowering marginalized communities through self-sufficiency and local food production	Social inclusion

Appendix O - Company G mitigating institutional voids

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'Traditional sanitation won't reach [remote locations]; it's very expensive, so we're much cheaper. We reach regions where the government doesn't.' (G1)	Expanding access to sanitation in underserved and remote areas	Reduction of infrastructure barriers

'The system is installed without the need for construction work, which would take a long time for a public sewage network project, something like that, we can also treat human feces locally, quickly, as I said, we have a project there that we installed in 60 days, 30 toilets in an indigenous village in the protected area, which the sanitation company would never have been able to do.' (G2)	Expanding access to sanitation in underserved and remote areas	Reduction of infrastructure barriers
'Our clients want to treat waste locally so it doesn't have to go to landfills, reducing costs with cold storage, collections, and ensuring proper disposal, without it going to a landfill and releasing harmful gases into the atmosphere.' (G2)	Reducing environmental externalities	Responsible production
'There is a real economic impact on the community, you know? A person who lives in a community, in a favela, and the company delivers gas [produced by waste] to them, which would cost them \$120 to buy the gas cylinder and they no longer have that expense in the month.' (G2)	Generating local economic benefits through circular energy solutions	Local economic strengthening
'It is innovative because the production of gas from human waste does not involve bureaucratic installation, it is adaptable to regions where we do not have, for example, electricity to carry out the installation.' (G3)	Developing adaptable technologies that overcome infrastructural barriers	Reduction of infrastructure barriers

Appendix P - Company H mitigating institutional voids

First-order codes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
'Our brand has to make waves. We have to break this idea of the perfect family, of everyone being perfect.' (H1)	Challenging traditional social norms	Social inclusion
'Our bodies, the company's models—we've always worked with Black models.' (H1)	Inclusion of marginalized groups	Reduction of racial prejudice
'To produce new fabric, how much water is used in washing, and how much dye is used, even without complete control, ends up in rivers or springs. So, removing this material that could otherwise go to waste avoids this type of environmental impact.' (H2)	Circular economy and efficient use of resources	Responsible production
'When we create campaigns, we always strive to find models, photographers, or professionals who represent minorities and contribute to this impact. People need to feel represented, right? If a company needs to produce a campaign, it chooses people who also need support and can contribute by giving the company a face.' (H2)	Creating opportunities for marginalized groups often excluded from formal markets	Job creation and social inclusion
'The company cares deeply about groups that aren't usually targeted, like minorities, even in its models and other aspects. This isn't its core focus, but it's something it embraces.' (H3)	Ethical engagement with minority groups	Social inclusion