



<https://www.designforsocialchange.org/journal/index.php/DISCERN-J>

ISSN 2184-6995

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.



Involving or not the beneficiaries as role players in social initiative games: Analysis of case studies

Pedro Sancho, Rute Gomes, Cláudia Pernencar

Published online: October 2021

To cite this article:

Sancho, P., Gomes, R., & Pernencar, C. (2021). Involving or not the beneficiaries as role players in social initiative games, analysis of case studies. *Discern: International Journal of Design for Social Change, Sustainable Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 2(2), 95-122.

Involving or not the beneficiaries as role players in social initiative games: Analysis of case studies

Pedro Sancho^a, Rute Gomes^b, Cláudia Pernencar^{c, d}

^aIADE, Faculty of Design, Technology and Communication, European University, 1200-649, Lisbon, Portugal. Psanchoferreira@gmail.com

^bCIAUD, Lisbon School of Architecture, Lisbon University, 1349-063, Lisbon, Portugal. Rutegomes@fa.ulisboa.pt

^cICNOVA, Nova Institute of Communication, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, NOVA University of Lisbon, 1069-061, Lisbon, Portugal. Claudiapernencar@fcsh.unl.pt

^dLIDA, Research Laboratory of Design and Arts, School of Fine Arts and Design, Polytechnic of Leiria, 2500-321 Caldas da Rainha, Portugal.

Abstract

Social inequalities are increasing the initiatives in which the provident state is requested to find solutions and tools to improve the social impact. In this perspective, the management and entrepreneurship fields assume a huge relevance in social innovation and social entrepreneurship. Manzini suggests (2015) that a more efficient model for fighting social inequalities within a vulnerable community is to involve the beneficiaries in the process when solving social problems through project development. With the focus on Manzini's (2015) proposal and having in mind the beneficiaries' involvement in this kind of initiative, a question emerged: What is the role of the beneficiaries' involvement as a critical success factor in the development of social innovation projects? A literature review was undertaken and guided the action of a case studies analysis matrix following these parameters: 1) business model; 2) public funding dependency; 3) beneficiaries' involvement levels and 4) business sustainability/longevity. Seven social entrepreneurship projects were analysed. The results and the discussion conclude that a correlation between longevity and the beneficiaries' involvement exists. When people are suffering from a lack of basic needs, their involvement in a project is affected. In such cases, the project's success is at risk. This being so, the design of social impact projects should consider the beneficiaries' involvement to positively influence their longevity. However, for this to happen, beneficiaries' basic needs should be assured.

Keywords: Beneficiaries' involvement, Design for social change, Social entrepreneurship, Social inequalities, Sustainable development

Introduction

Social impact projects have been growing, according to Bahmani et al. (2012). This increase is due to the ineffectiveness of social policies based on welfare models. These practices are focused on fighting social inequalities that are overcharging the national providence resources (Netto, 2013). As a social service mechanism, it involves donating goods or services directly to the beneficiaries without any level of involvement or commitment by them.

Welfare practices do not solve the existing root of the problem but rather the consequences. In this way, public and private project development agents keep being overwhelmed with problems that are not solved effectively.

In this context, management and social entrepreneurship began to have a huge relevance through the application of specific tools that provide efficiency and innovation, fight poverty and hunger and improve the health system, housing and education.

This article aims to understand how the beneficiaries' involvement directly affects the social impact of a project's success. As suggested by authors such as Manzini (2015), beneficiaries suffering from social inequalities may play a very important role in the development of a social impact solution through their involvement. This context can be measured using different levels of involvement as proposed by Manzini (2015, p. 107). Each level implies distinct project management approaches and beneficiary behaviour.

The study that will be presented in this article intends to answer the following research question: What is the role of the beneficiary's involvement as a critical success factor in the development of social innovation projects?

Literature review

Social impact projects are overloaded because social inequalities have increased. They aim to ensure the country's providence resources. The overloading scenario happens for various reasons: 1) human resources with low salaries or working as volunteers; 2) social organizations operating in the field without a strategic vision; 3) lack of management competencies (Franco, 2015); 4) a great dependence on public funding, but most of all; 5) by the fact that the structures that fight against social inequalities usually follow welfare practices and do not provide any investment in social policies to eradicate the main causes of this inequality (Netto, 2013).

The welfare state is a system that allows a country's government to assure social services to its population, such as public health, unemployment support, etc. For that, taxes are used. This path is essential in fighting inequalities, but the system becomes overwhelmed/overcharged. This happens because a great dependence on the system by its beneficiaries exists.

This scenario caught the attention of several entrepreneurs with a set of tools, techniques and models used in corporate entrepreneurship. These entrepreneurs developed individual or collective initiatives to fight against social inequalities generated by different actual contexts. Thus, the entrepreneurship and management fields assumed greater importance in social innovation and social entrepreneurship. The inclusion of these themes in different contexts, expressed by the need to make social initiatives financially self-sustainable, either by patrons' donations, strategic partnerships or the sale of their own products or initiatives. New business and collaboration models amongst partners seek these initiatives to become sustainable and increase their positive impact (Bahmani et al., 2012). Manzini (2015) defends a strategy where involving the beneficiaries in the production and management of a social entrepreneurship initiative is a key factor.

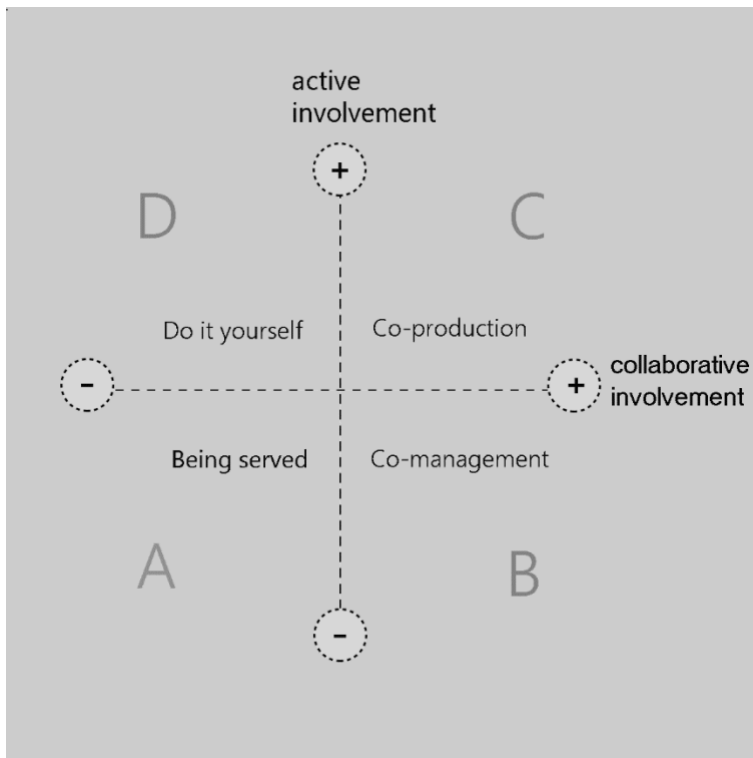


Figure 1: Beneficiaries' involvement quadrants in social innovation projects.
Source: Manzini (2015, p. 107), Fernando Vieira's illustration.

Manzini claims that last century was dominated by the concept of "If someone is hungry give them fast food or a tin of ready to eat (or, if they can afford it, give them a luxury restaurant)" (Manzini 2015, p.94). This assumption focuses on solving inequalities without any effort, thought or knowledge production developed by beneficiaries. This is the kind of approach Netto (2013) refers to. They neither improve the individual's conduct of systematic problem-solving nor seek effectiveness and longevity.

Social impact solutions that select beneficiaries as actors in the project development can add value to the project, as the beneficiaries invest their own time managing and operating the project. This is one of the most efficient ways to develop social impact, a long-lasting project and ensure the subsistence of the initiative. Manzini (2015) proposed levels that assume different parameters (Fig. 1):

1. Quadrant A: Beneficiaries show low levels of involvement in the activity. Manzini claims that this happens when the provider/designer only serves the final user. In this 'collaborative encounter', the condition of being involved does not reveal huge value through the project collaboration. This quadrant is found in welfare-based projects.
2. Quadrant B: Also represents beneficiaries' low levels of involvement. However, here, they are final users and involved in the project's design and management. The goal is to understand how the project can serve them efficiently. The path here is not directed towards the organization.
3. Quadrant C: The beneficiaries are intensively involved in the project's activities. There is co-production amongst the beneficiaries. Both providers and beneficiaries are co-producers and add value in a collaborative perspective.
4. Quadrant D: The beneficiaries have a strong connection. They are involved autonomously in project activities without the provider's intervention. All the social innovation operation is in the beneficiaries' charge, who become simultaneously the project providers and beneficiaries.

In more urgent operational contexts, such as agriculture and fighting poverty, beneficiaries' involvement is a key factor in designing, implementing and measuring the social initiative. Working with beneficiaries in a project allows them to recognise their weaknesses, and consequently, the project design will easily meet their needs (Foley et al., nd). Similarly, Thou (2012) argues that beneficiary involvement provides more sustainability in a project because the metrics that monitor it are used by the own project's beneficiaries. This scenario allows an efficient and effective adjustment of the project's strategy. In short, beneficiary involvement contributes to the activities' operationalization required by a social initiative and allows the development of more successful and reliable metrics, based on the beneficiaries' inclusion in their planning.

The opposite scenario also happens. In Africa, for example, many development programmes are planned and implemented without community inclusion, which led them to close. Another critical success factor is when a great dependence on communitarian funds for project development is used to fight the problem (Kinyata & Abiodun, 2020). In sum, the involvement of beneficiaries in a social initiative acts as a tool of empowerment. The beneficiaries acquire deeper knowledge about their problems, which allows them to identify real needs and design initiatives that are more likely to have an effective social impact. This means that the involved actors are articulating, working and managing more effective realistic project metrics.

Methods and materials

To answer the question set, two main methods were applied: First, a narrative literature review of communitarian intervention (Kinyata & Abiodun, 2020), design for social innovation (Manzini, 2015), social entrepreneurship (Patel & Mehta, 2011) and social service (Netto, 2013) with the main goal of understanding the importance for beneficiaries of being engaged in a social initiative. Second, we listed specific parameters to help the research team develop a qualitative analysis method to compare social entrepreneurship case studies. This critical empirical analysis aimed to comprehend different practices/models of management and functioning related to social entrepreneurship projects and identify the relevance of beneficiaries' involvement as a critical success factor.

Tool - case studies comparative table

With a list of parameters to figure out each social entrepreneurship case study's details, a comparative table was developed in two sections, as follows:

1. Identification: Based on the project's identity from the Portuguese Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Map (MIES), the topics were: 1) goal of the project and excluded intervention areas; 2) identified problem; 3) entrepreneurs' identification; 4) function and impact on geographical area; 5) identification used, as they were not framed within the research goal. Parameters as a business model and longevity were added empirically aiming to establish a relationship amongst both. Manzini's beneficiary involvement scale (Manzini, 2015) correlates beneficiary involvement in a social initiative with the business model and consequently with longevity. By contrast, the topic of dependence on public funds was introduced because the researchers wanted to understand if there was a direct relationship between this and longevity.
2. Analysis: 1) business model, comprising a set of activities enabling a project's increase in social value in; 2) public funding dependency, i.e. how much these initiatives rely/depend on public funding to carry on their mission; 3) beneficiary involvement level, i.e. the involvement of the beneficiaries in the project, on distinct levels (Manzini, 2015); and 4) business sustainability/longevity, representing the time the project remains active and its growth.

Sample selection

The inclusion criteria for the case studies were: 1) social entrepreneurship initiative and 2) involving activities from distinct intervention areas. These are justified because social entrepreneurship projects and profit-generating entrepreneurship projects reveal natures from different contexts and several distinct actors, such as stakeholders, beneficiaries, cultures and developed solutions. A variety of social entrepreneurship projects enables more diverse analysis.

Table 1 presents the seven social entrepreneurship initiatives selected from MIES, the Portuguese platform that records in detail the spatial distribution of social innovation and entrepreneurship nationwide, and from selected social entrepreneurship literature.

| Selected Project | Goal |
|---------------------------------|---|
| A - Lijjat Sisters | To provide financial support empowering women who aim to achieve their independence and want to be integrated into the labour market. |
| B - Refood | To stimulate the fight against food waste through tracking restaurant leftovers. |
| C - Dress for Success | To integrate women socially and professionally by strengthening their self-esteem. |
| D - WOW – Word of Woman | To inspire others and spread experiences, histories, values and projects created by women. |
| E - Reklusa | To occupy, educate and reintegrate female inmates and former inmates socially and professionally. |
| F - Manicómio | To provide financial autonomy and break the stigma towards mentally ill patients. |
| G - A avó veio trabalhar | To fight against seniors' isolation and promote active senior ageing. |

Table 1: Selected case study projects.

The case studies analysis is summarized through a table that includes details of the parameters, followed by critical reflection that cross-references the data collected with the literature review.

Case study analysis

Each case study includes a brief description of the project and an analysis of the business model, public funds dependency, beneficiaries' engagement level and business sustainability/ longevity (Tables 2–8). Figures 2–8 are infographics that explain how the business model works. Figures 9 and 10 compare the difference in the set parameters within the sample.

Case study A, the Lijjat Sisters project, recruits Indian women who, due to their low social status (Indian caste system), are unable to find a job to provide financially for their own families. Lijjat Sisters recruits and integrates them, providing a job; thus, the women end up being socially integrated and having the possibility of being financially autonomous.

In this project, every employee receives profits from the generated sales of the papad snack.

Case A: Lijjat Sisters

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Business model | Recruitment and professional involvement of Indian women, who are responsible for producing and selling traditional papad snacks. The profit from sales is distributed equally amongst all the collaborators no matter the tasks they perform within the project. |
| Public funding dependency | None. |
| Beneficiary involvement level | Quadrant D: extensive beneficiary participation in the management and production. |
| Business sustainability | The Lijjat Sisters began in 1959 with seven collaborators. After 50 years, this number increased to 42, and their turnover reached 111 million dollars. The value chain is considered the top reason for a business's longevity. |

Table 2: Case Study A – Lijjat Sisters.

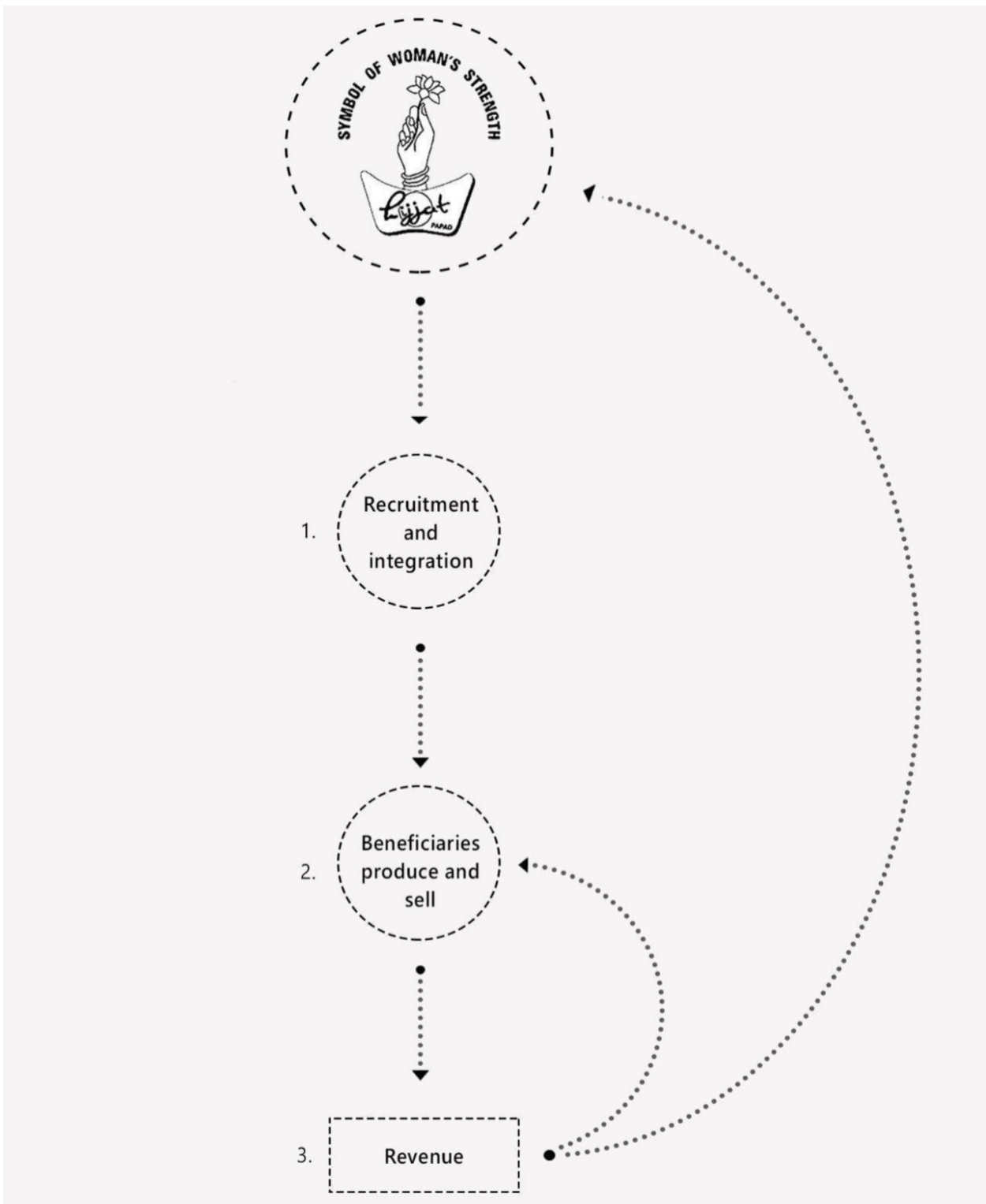


Figure 2: Lijjat Sisters' business model. Image credit: Fernando Vieira.

Refood fights food waste and directs meals from local restaurants to people in need through partnerships established between *Refood*, a chain of local Portuguese restaurants, and volunteers who distribute the meals in the cities where the project is active.

Case B: Refood

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Business model | Refood depends 100% on volunteers, does not generate any profit and is managed by an executive committee. The value chain is considered vulnerable because it depends on volunteers, government funding and donations. The switch of authority from the collecting units may compromise the project's quality and credibility. The business model is an example of how the use of different management tools, namely human resources, are capable of effectively fighting a problem. |
| Public funding dependency | Yes |
| Beneficiary involvement level | Quadrant A: based on social assistance, the beneficiaries are only served by the Social Initiative Project Manager; Quadrant: the beneficiaries are involved in the project concept and design. |
| Business sustainability | Refood has been growing since 2011. It started with one pickup for the shipping and distribution. In the beginning, it served 34 beneficiaries with only one volunteer. By 2020, this had increased to 25 pickup vans and 4000 volunteers. |

Table 3: Case Study B – Refood.

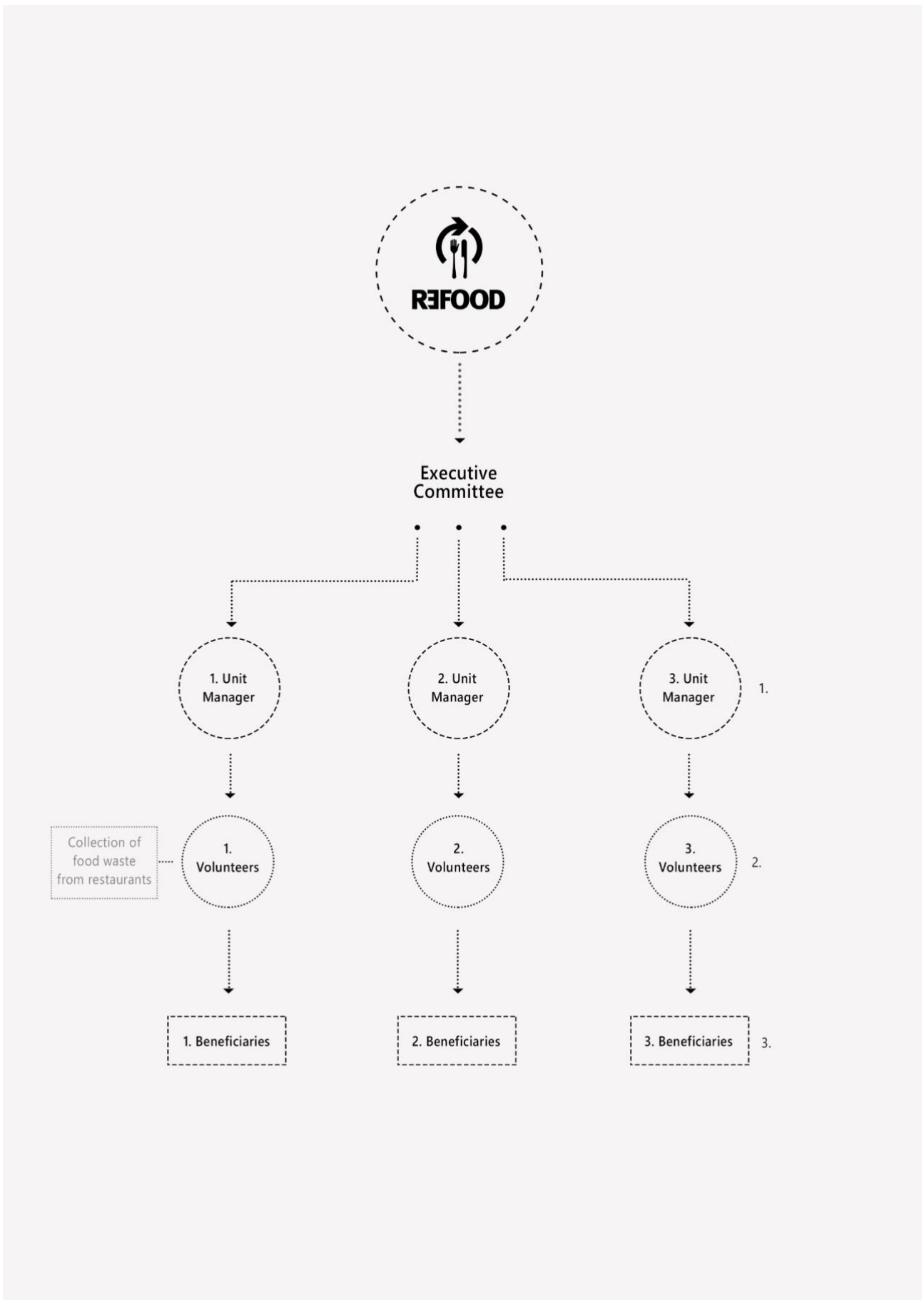


Figure 3: ReFood's business model. Image credit: Fernando Vieira.

Dress for success empowers women to enable them to enter the job-hunting market by providing fashion advice and preparing women for job interviews.

| Case C: Dress for Success | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Business model | The Dress for Success business model depends financially on patronage. Image consultants and professional agents develop their activities near to the beneficiary women identified by other institutions. |
| Public funding dependency | None. |
| Beneficiary involvement level | Quadrant A: based on welfare, the beneficiaries are only served by the project. |
| Business sustainability | This Portuguese case was founded in 2012 and is still active. |

Table 4: Case Study C - Dress for Success.

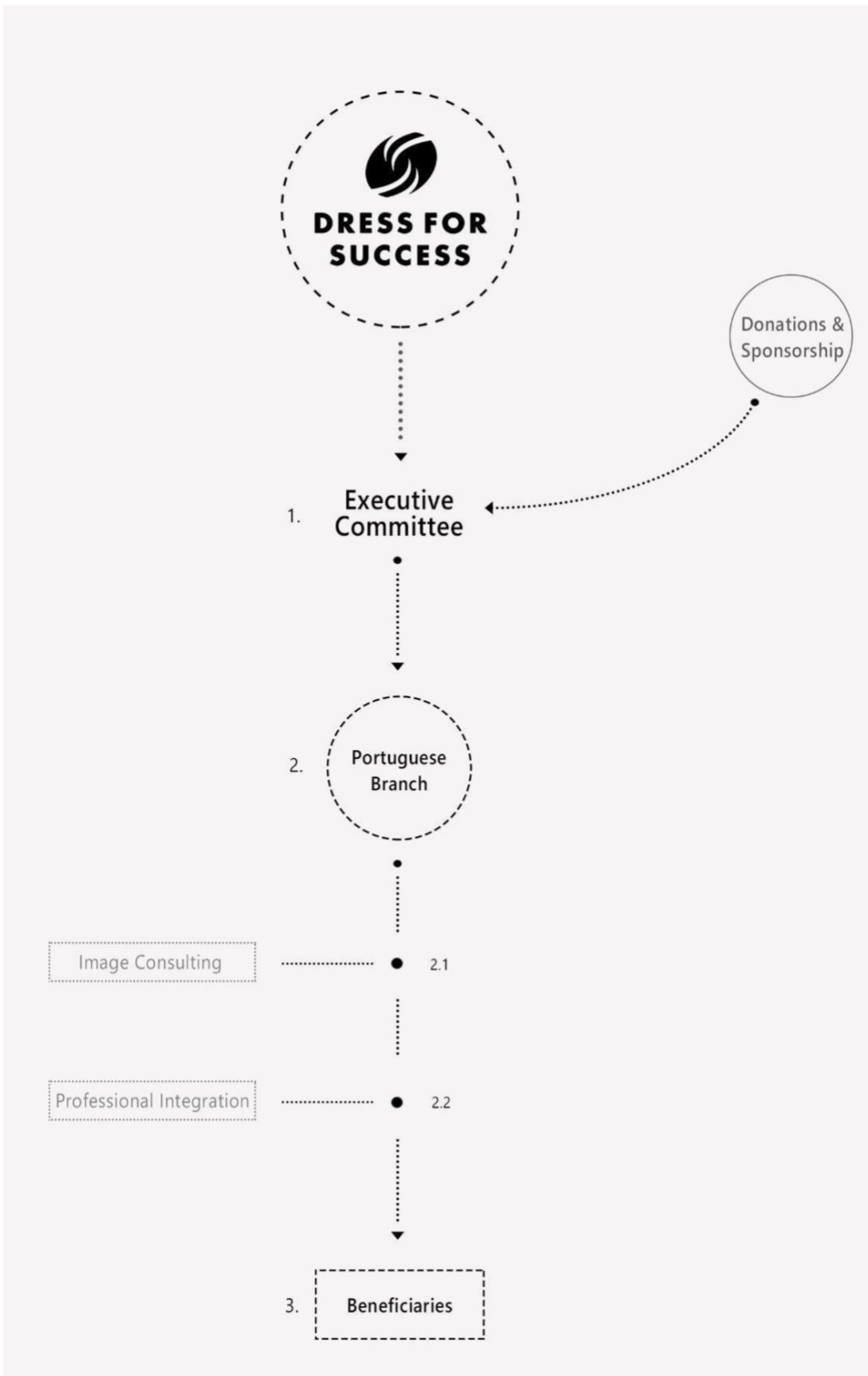


Figure 4: Dress for Success business' model. Image credit: Fernando Vieira.

Word of Woman provides marketing and management consulting services to women entrepreneurs. They work directly with women in order to boost their entrepreneurial capacities.

| Case D: Word of Woman | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Business model | WOW works directly with their beneficiaries, providing marketing and communication services. To keep the business model active and robust, WOW depends only on its collaborators. |
| Public funding dependency | None. |
| Beneficiary involvement level | Quadrant A: based on welfare, the beneficiaries are only served by the project manager. |
| Business sustainability | Active since 2013. |

Table 5: Case Study D – WOW

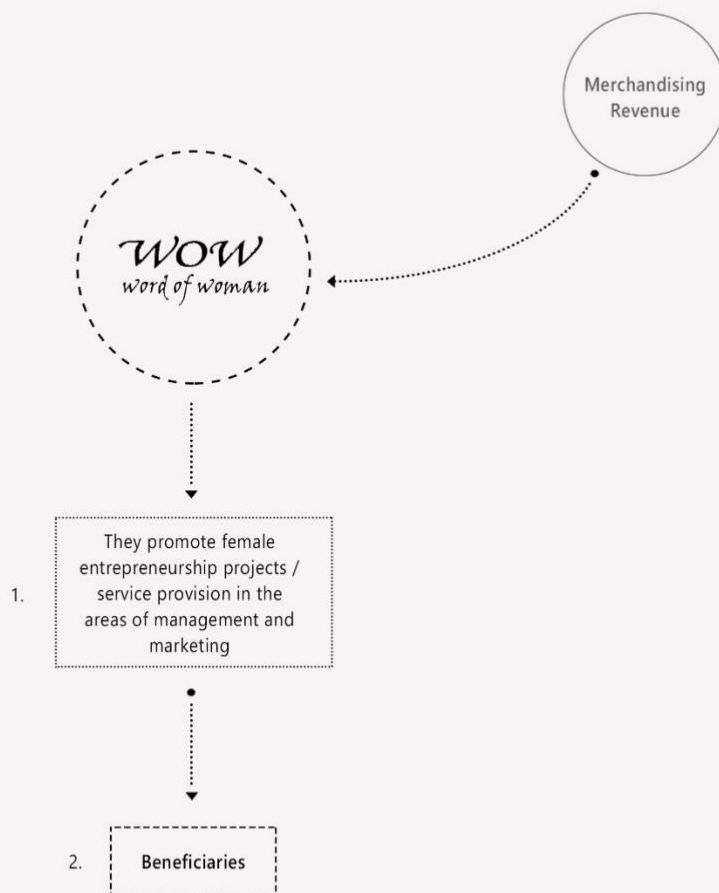


Figure 5: WOW's business model. Image credit: Fernando Vieira.

The *Reklusa* project aims to provide female prison inmates with craft skills, financial income and social integration after prison time. Through partnerships with designers, jewellery pieces and fashion accessories are developed and produced in a partnership with Tires prison. A percentage of the product sales is allocated to the inmates. After they leave the prison, they assume functions within the project, such as sales or manufacturing.

Case E: Reklusa

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Business model | Reklusa’s business model is based on a partnership with Tires prison. The product design is developed outside the prison and then sent to the prison to be developed manually by the inmates. The final products are sold at the Reklusa shop. A percentage of sales is collected to be included in a financial fund for the prisoners. The remaining amount is for the trademark. |
| Public funding dependency | None. |
| Beneficiary involvement level | Quadrant C: This involves co-production of the project’s gathering value. The beneficiaries dedicate their time and knowledge towards the project. |
| Business sustainability | The project started in 2013. The lack of government support and no involvement by other associated partners, such as Tires Prison, caused its end in 2018. The project is no longer active. |

Table 6: Case Study E – Reklusa.

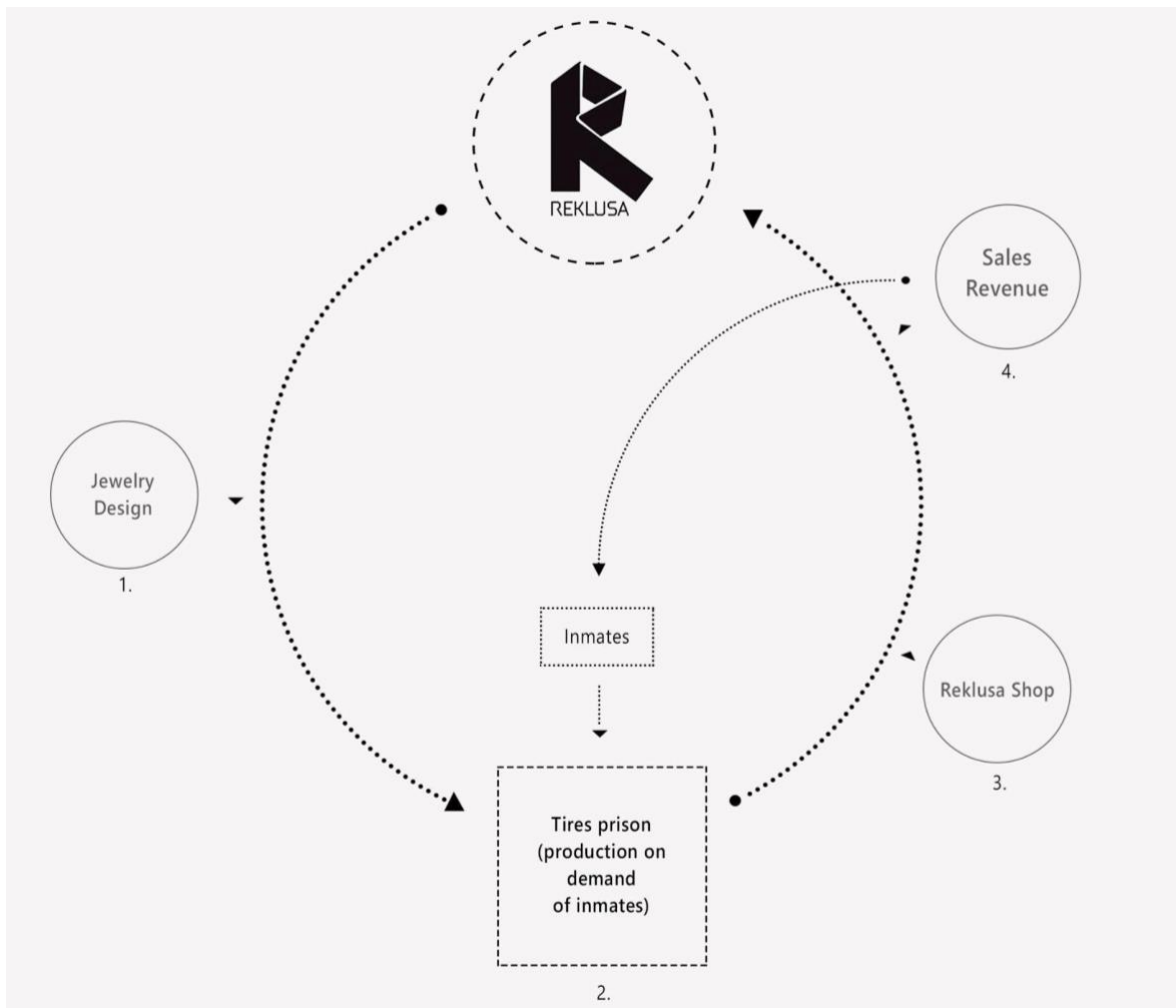


Figure 6: Reklusa's business model.

Image credit: Fernando Vieira.

Manicómio provides a space for individuals with diagnosed mental illness to express themselves through art. *Manicómio* offers a scholarship for the beneficiaries and acts as an intermediary with national and international art dealers. A percentage of the sales goes to the resident artists. They have also held art workshops for members of the public who are interested in learning different types of arts and crafts. A percentage of the workshop revenue also goes to the resident artists.

Case F: Manicómio

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Business model | <p>Manicómio is based in an art gallery space that actively encourages artistic work by people diagnosed with mental illness. Two founders guarantee to assure the project's management. All the created work is developed by the beneficiaries. They are supported by sponsorship, which includes meals, transport and a salary. In addition, the peoples' salaries come from 70% of their artwork sales and 90% from the workshops promoted by them.</p> <p>Sometimes, partnerships with well-known designers contribute with private-label products for Manicómio's clients. In this case, the income amount is shared amongst the project and the involved artists. Medical clinics are also involved partners for the artists as an income source near the community that provides low-cost medical services in their space.</p> |
| Public funding dependency | Yes. |
| Beneficiary involvement level | Quadrant C: there is co-production from the value achieved. The beneficiaries dedicate their time and knowledge towards the project. |
| Business sustainability | Active since 2019. |

Table 7: Manicómio case study.

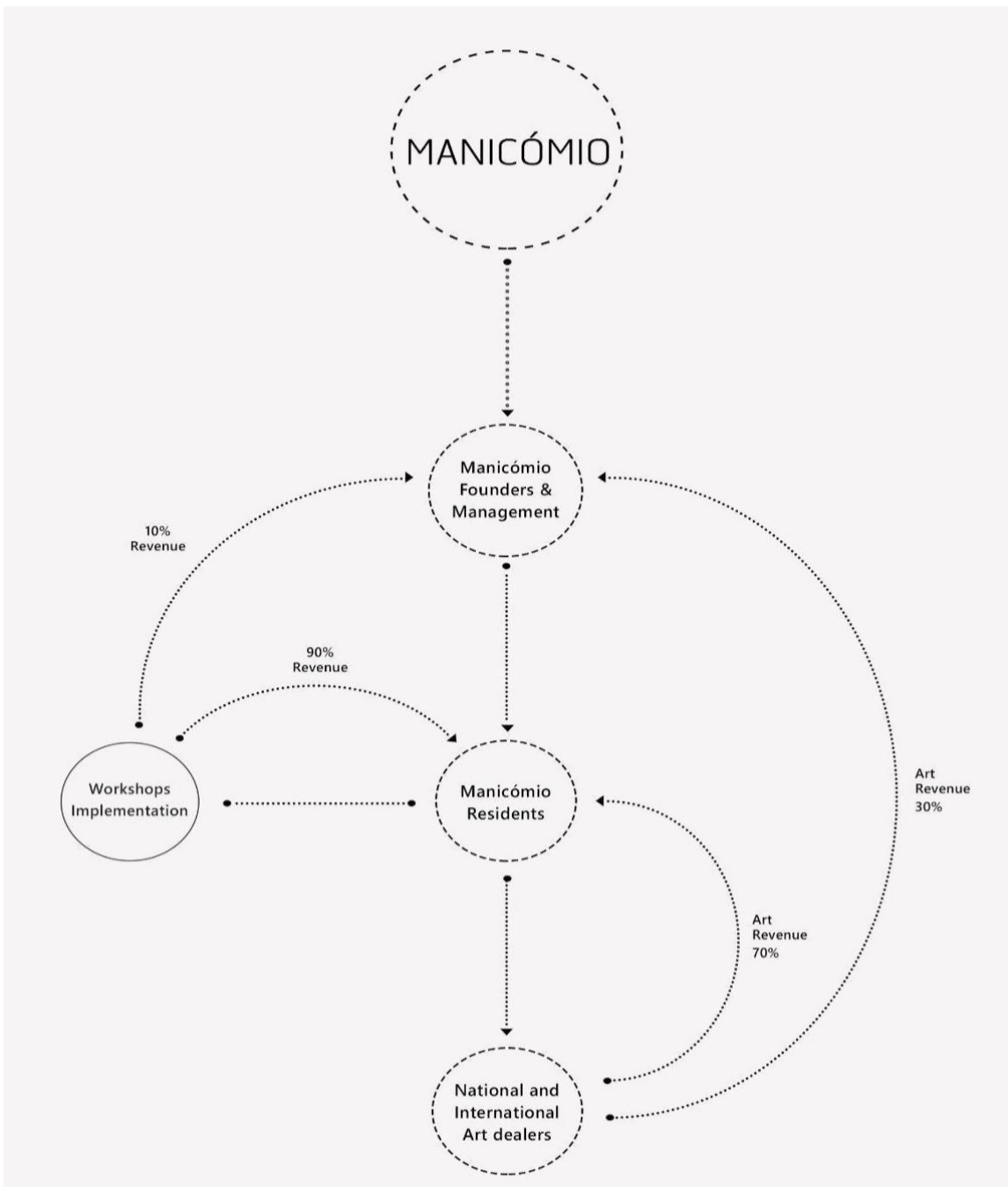


Figure 7: Manicómio 's Business Model.

Illustrated by Fernando Vieira.

A avó veio trabalhar is a project that fights senior isolation by providing a communal space for elderly to develop work in sewing workshops, knitting and embroidery. They also participate in video clips and photo sessions. The revenue from sales and other activities goes to the project itself and is allocated to buy experiences for the elderly people, such as travelling or attending cultural events.

Case G: A Avó veio trabalhar

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Business model | <p>The project's goal is to fight against senior isolation by promoting an active senior age. It provides services to trademarks, partners and individuals. The income is reinvested in the project and in the 'grannies' community', offering them travel and other unique experiences. The project management is guaranteed by the two founders. However, the grannies are always consulted before any decision is taken.</p> <p>The grannies' services are diverse: sewing workshops, knitting and embroidery, they also participate in video clips, photo sessions, develop pieces for trademarks, partners and artists, and develop objects for their mark selling.</p> |
| Public funding dependency | None. |
| Beneficiary involvement level | Quadrant C: there is co-production of the value achieved by the project. The beneficiaries dedicate their time and knowledge towards the project. |
| Business sustainability | Active since 2014. |

Table 8: A Avó Veio Trabalhar case study.

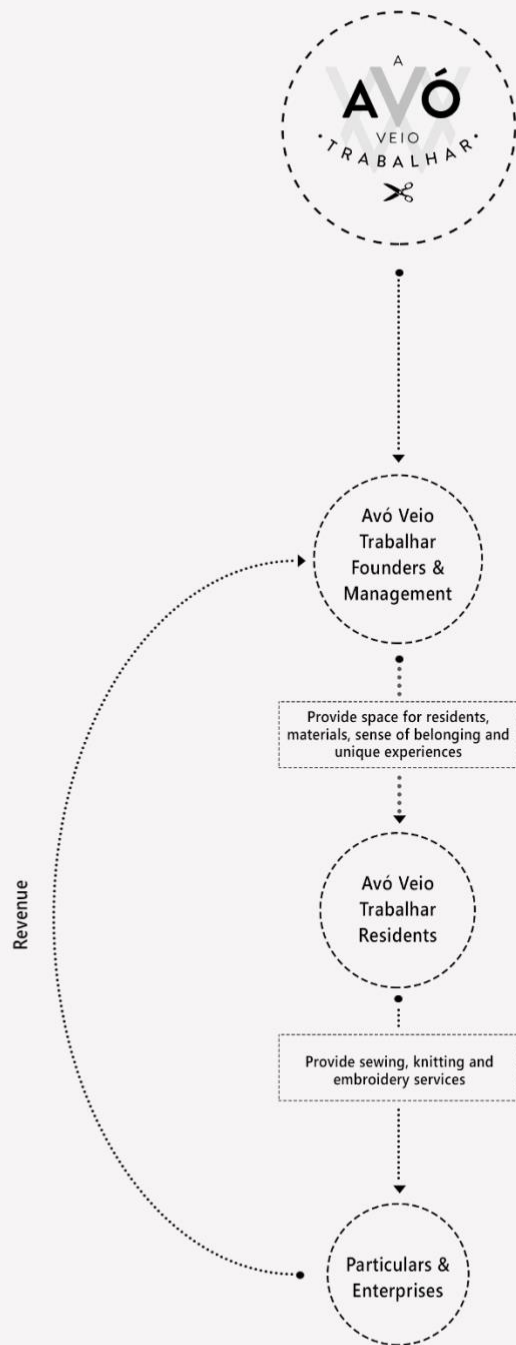


Figure 8: A Avó veio trabalhar business model. Fernando Vieira's Illustration.

Results and discussion

Business model

The case studies presented in this article reveals distinct levels of complexity in how they plan to earn money or generate value with their product and customer base in a specific market. The Lijjat Sisters, Reklusa, Manicómio and Refood projects, for example, are those businesses whose models reveal issues of great complexity. The first seems to be the most solid. The success factors involved a debate about where they needed a generalized workforce and affordable production tools. The project is based on an entrepreneurial activity that generates income for all the involved collaborators. This is a flexible way for beneficiaries to constantly achieve financial autonomy.

If we compare this action with the remaining sample projects, it seems like how a commercial enterprise works. The second one, Reklusa, had a business model like Lijjat Sisters'. They used human resources in vulnerable scenarios. It is considered social inclusion because it generated an income source for people recruited through a partnership with Tires prison that, however, lacked support and consolidation. Compared to the Lijjat Sisters' case, Reklusa had the disadvantage of not owning the production tools. In the Lijjat Sisters' case, as Thou (2012) claims, the beneficiaries became a crucial factor regarding the project's sustainability. This is due to their engagement and how they are involved in establishing new strategies, goal metrics and even the total operationalization of the project. These factors contribute towards efficient monitoring and consequently towards the initiative's sustainability.

Manicómio has a business model based on the free provision of space where art pieces are created. It acts as an intermediary for art pieces nationally and internationally and is considered to have a complex business model due to the number of agents and partnerships involved.

Refood's business model is not easy to understand due to its organization. It has an executive committee that establishes the rules and goals for the existing units. Each unit is managed by a person who manages the volunteers, answering to their local beneficiaries' demands. Unlike the other case studies, Refood's business model can be implemented in other regions following its standard model. This approach is considered a success factor. However, their growth may also represent a higher dependence on private patrons, government funds and volunteers, which makes the project's position more susceptible to political cycles. Although its business model is quite complex, it is also financially very vulnerable. This model is not sustained by Netto (2013), who claims that a kind of welfare-based model does not contribute to the eradication of inequalities, as it does not solve the structural problem of inequality but rather fights the immediate consequences of hunger.

Dress for Success, Word of Woman and A avó veio trabalhar are the case studies that present the simplest business model. Dress for Success's model depends on private patrons, partnerships and welfare practices. Its success factor directly links to an international network with plenty of organizations who provide financial support and partners. This allows the project to develop with few sustainability concerns. Compared to the other case studies, Dress for Success is the only project linked to a worldwide structure. The WOW network bases its business model on selling services and merchandising. It is independent of external partners for its activity development, operating only with its team's knowledge. This can be recognised as a success factor. The WOW network similar to Dress for Success in that the approach level gives autonomy to the beneficiaries through supplying services. Dress for Success, WOW and A Avó veio Trabalhar, as models based on services, allow free income from outside, which differs to Lijjat Sisters, where all the resources are invested into the project and not distributed amongst the beneficiaries.

In both A Avó veio Trabalhar and Manicómio, one considers a success factor to be hosting the beneficiaries in a structure that develops manual work.

Involvement level

The case studies of Lijjat Sisters, Reklusa, Manicomio and A Avó veio Trabalhar present high levels of beneficiary involvement. Lijjat Sisters presents the highest involvement level from the projects' beneficiaries (Quadrant D). This project works as a closed group, where entrepreneurs/ beneficiaries are those who decide on the business, and their production tools allow more efficient control of the value chain. This involvement level provides higher autonomy and financial sustainability to the beneficiaries involved. Within the sample, this is the only project where beneficiaries are autonomous towards the project management. According to Manzini (2015), this quadrant shows intense involvement from beneficiaries.

Quadrant C is found in the Reklusa, Manicómio and A Avó veio Trabalhar case studies, where the beneficiaries participate actively. From this group, A Avó veio Trabalhar is the only one where people co-produce value within the project, but they do not receive any financial income. Curiously, those cases which present the highest involvement level frequently have their beneficiaries doing manual work, such as artwork, sewing, embroidery or cooking.

The cases with the lowest involvement level are Refood, Dress for Success and Word of Woman. Refood's beneficiaries have a low involvement level towards the initiative. They only serve and work as a consultant regarding the project's implementation. In this case, the involvement quadrant is between A and B.

Dress for Success represents an involvement condition from Quadrant A, i.e. low beneficiary participation in the project. This may be due to the level of fashion expertise and knowledge needed for managing and operating within the initiative. Quadrant A represents the lowest involvement level from the beneficiary perspective. Dress for Success and Refood provide a service that contributes directly to the beneficiaries' wellbeing and autonomy. The Word of Woman project also reveals a similar scenario to Dress for Success: both depend on expertise for the mission's development.

Public funding

From the studied sample, Refood and Manicómio are those with the highest dependence on public funding. Refood depends on public funding for its ongoing initiatives. Therefore, this project is more vulnerable to political and economic cycles that may put at risk the beneficiaries who depend on the project. This approach reinforces the importance of choosing strategies that better involve beneficiaries' life situations instead of following welfare practices (Thou, 2012).

Manicómio depends on public funding for its development, which is justified by its target public – people diagnosed with mental illness. From the case studies presented, this is the only one where public funds focus only on the beneficiaries, who receive an income from their activities.

With no reliance on public funds, Word of Woman, A Avó veio Trabalhar and Lijjat Sisters follow a different strategy. The WOW network and A Avó veio Trabalhar are determined only by the services they provide. Lijjat Sisters does not need any public funding, as the whole operation depends on the production and sale of papad snacks. Their independence in relation to the obtained incomes is suitable for a less vulnerable project.

From the studied sample, two cases differ from the remaining ones: Dress for Success and Reklusa. Dress for Success does not depend on public funding, as it belongs to a worldwide organization, thus ensuring the project's subsistence. Reklusa did not depend on public funding but depended on a partnership with a public institution, Tires prison. This is why the project ended.

Business sustainability/longevity

The previously analysed parameters directly influence the project's longevity. From the studied sample, Lijjat Sisters, Refood, Dress for Success, WOW, Manicómio, and A Avó veio Trabalhar are still active. Lijjat Sisters' business model is the most robust, since this initiative has been active since 1959. Refood has been working and growing since 2010. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they were closed. Their dependence on restaurant network partnerships puts them at serious risk. Nevertheless, Refood is still active. Dress for Success (Portuguese branch) has the highest financial support, as the connection to the Dress for Success headquarters strengthens its longevity (Table 4). WOW has been active since 2013, and like Lijjat Sisters has its production tools. Both are cases with specialized knowledge that contributes towards more autonomy. Manicómio and A Avó veio Trabalhar are the most recent cases. They have been active since, 2019 and 2014, respectively.



Figure 9: Case study comparative analysis 1/2. Image credit: Fernando Vieira.

CASE STUDY TABLE ANALYSES

2/2

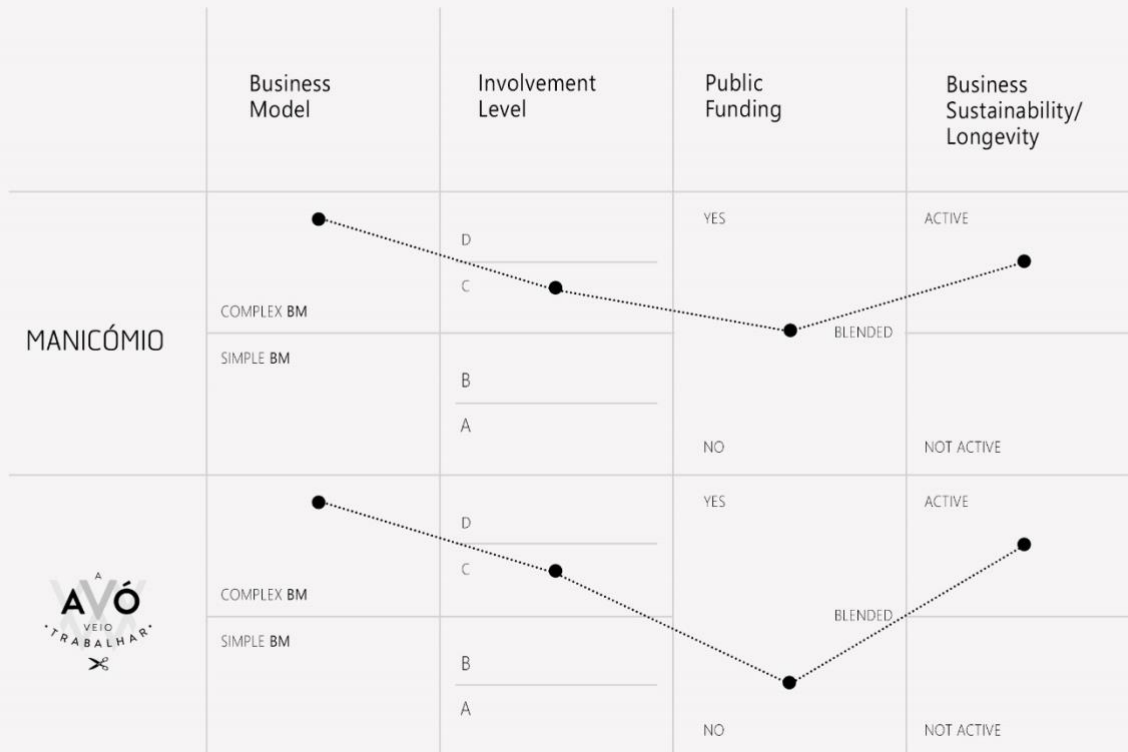


Figure 10: Case study comparative analysis 2/2. Image credit: Fernando Vieira.

Conclusions

The current context, particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, has left exposed a set of communities disadvantaged in relation to health care access, food and housing, amongst others. This scenario has aggravated the overcharging of tools that assure a country's welfare state. The subjects of management and entrepreneurship have become imperative to operate those tools more efficiently to fight against social inequalities.

In answer to the question, What is the role of the beneficiary's involvement as a critical success factor in the development of social innovation projects?, the literature review demonstrated the urgency in developing new intervention strategies without involving welfare practices. Otherwise, stimulating beneficiaries' autonomy and financial independence lead us to conclude that beneficiary involvement is a key factor establishing efficient and long-term strategies (Foley et al., n.d). Considering that, and reinforced by Netto (2013), the case studies demonstrated the importance of beneficiary involvement as a contribution towards decreasing social inequalities.

However, according to the analysis of the sample, it is notable that in some initiatives, beneficiaries' high involvement did not achieve the result of a planned social impact or even a situational change for the beneficiaries. Lijjat Sisters is the only studied initiative where the beneficiary is involved in the project and generates income directly for herself. In Reklusa and Manicómio, for example, there is also that possibility, although the generated incomes may not be enough for an individual to achieve financial autonomy. Interestingly, the A Avó veio Trabalhar project has an intense involvement level (Quadrant C), and its sustainability is assured by the active participation of the beneficiaries. They do not receive any sort of financial income, leading us to assume their financial situation allows that context. In this case, the social initiative aims to fight against elderly loneliness and social exclusion, and the beneficiaries' financial situation is not an issue. In the case of Manicómio, although the beneficiaries have an income, they depend on sponsorship enabling them to focus on their artistic work. Once again, the involvement level is high and the beneficiaries co-produce value in the project. All of them depend on the welfare state mechanism to participate in the project.

Manzini's involvement framework assumes high importance in this study. He argues that an intense level of involvement shows greater benefits for social impact projects and therefore for beneficiaries (Manzini, 2015). For the authors of this article, Manzini's premise is not so linear, however. As seen in some of the case studies, such as Manicómio, A Avó veio trabalhar and Reklusa, a higher involvement level of the beneficiary does not result in a life-changing situation for the beneficiaries. Manicómio and Reklusa still rely on public funding to fight against social inequalities. A Avó veio trabalhar allows an intense level of involvement because there are socio-economic factors that contribute to this situation. This means that the articulation between intensive involvement where value to the project is co-produced and public funding supporting the cost of the projects allows their self-sufficiency and results in great benefit for the beneficiaries.

The opposite scenario of Manzini's discourse is apparent in the Refood initiative, which presents a very low level of involvement from the beneficiaries, which is not advocated by Manzini (2015) or Netto (2013). It entails welfare, which according to Netto (2013) is a practice that does not contribute to the eradication of the social problem. However, the work they do is pertinent and urgent, due to the beneficiaries' precarious situation. These two cases demonstrate that a more intense involvement level may not always occur. Autonomy and financial independence may not always happen, no matter the involvement level.

The welfare state is a way of protecting beneficiaries. They do not have any financial subsistence in an assumption labelled by market economies. Lijjat Sisters refers to fighting social inequalities. However, it is focused on an enterprise initiative or cooperative entrepreneurship. The social impact occurs during business development. The Reklusa case study demonstrated a business model based on a public partnership, intending to integrate and educate inmates. The literature review showed that the taxes which are tools of a welfare state demand the adoption of new approaches since welfare practices do not work (Netto, 2013). Initiatives like Manicómio show that beneficiaries' autonomy can be achieved, starting from a point of view where financial independence exists through sponsorship income, demonstrating that in some cases it is necessary to adopt welfare practices.

The reflections in this conclusion lead to the following questions: the first relates to the beneficiaries' involvement and the second to model development to effectively integrate different actors in a successful social initiative: 1) How can one profit better from beneficiaries' competencies and capacity contributing positively towards a more successful social impact project? 2) What characteristics must a social entrepreneurship model have to effectively identify beneficiaries' needs, involved contexts and their development models? This last question comes as a clue for future thinking/development, hoping to contribute towards successful social initiatives and respective beneficiaries.

References

Bahmani, S., Galindo, M., & Méndez, M.T. (2012). Non-profit organizations, entrepreneurship, social capital, and economic growth. *Small Bus Econ*, 38, 271–281. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-010-9274-7>

Dress for Success (2021). <https://lisbon.dressforsuccess.org>

Foley, E., Lithur, N. O., Nimo- Ampredú, C., & Abbey, W. (n.d.). Beneficiary participation and its impact on effective social protection programming. Ghana Inclusive Development Research Network. https://www.gidrn.com/docs/GIRDN_Report_09.pdf

Franco, R. C. (2015). *Diagnóstico das organizações não governamentais em Portugal*. Universidade Católica Portuguesa; Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

Kinyata, G. S., & Abiodun, N. L. (2020). The impact of community participation on projects' success in Africa: A bottom up approach. *International Journal of Research in Sociology and Anthropology*, 6(3), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2454-8677.0603001>

Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation*. The MIT Press.

Mapa de inovação e empreendedorismo social (n.d.), Mapa de inovação e empreendedorismo social interativo. <https://e-social.pt>

Netto, J. P. (2013). Assistencialismo e regressividade profissional no serviço social. *Intervenção social*, 41, 11–35. <http://hdl.handle.net/11067/1075>

Patel, S., & Mehta, K. (2011). Life's principles as a framework for designing successful social enterprises. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 2 (1), 218–230.

Re-food (2021). <http://www.re-food.org/pt>

Tomás, A. (2020). Manicómio - O projeto Português onde a arte desconstrói a doença mental. Contacto online, Feb. <https://www.wort.lu/pt/portugal/manic-mio-o-projeto-portugues-onde-a-arte-desconstr-i-a-doenca-mental-5e50237fda2cc1784e356acc>

Thou, Agatha W. (2012). The effect of beneficiary participation on project monitoring and evaluation: the case of Kenya Agricultural Productivity Project, Nyandarua district. [Master's thesis, Department of Business Administration, Kenyatta University, Kenya.