Article

Social Innovation as a Support for the Visibility of Vulnerable Communities

Raquel Francisco Mafra [1], Jacir Leonir Casagrande [2], Ana Regina de Aguiar Dutra [1,3], Nei Antonio Nunes [1,2], Felipe Texeira Dias [3,4], Samuel Borges Barbosa [3,5] and José Baltazar Salgueirinho Osório de Andrade Guerra [1,3,*]

[1] Graduate Program in Administration, University of Southern Santa Catarina, Florianópolis 88010-010, Brazil; raquel.mafra@gmail.com (R.F.M.); ana.aguiar@animaeducacao.com.br (A.R.d.A.D.); nei.nunes@animaeducacao.com.br (N.A.N.)
[2] Research Group on Social Innovation, Florianópolis 88010-010, Brazil; jacir.casagrande@gmail.com
[3] Centre for Sustainable Development, Florianópolis 88010-010, Brazil; felipeteixeiradias@gmail.com (F.T.D.); osamuelbarbosa@gmail.com (S.B.B.)
[4] Graduate Program in Social Development, State University of Montes Claros, Montes Claros 39401-089, Brazil
[5] Institute of Exact Sciences and Technology, Federal University of Viçosa, Viçosa 36570-900, Brazil
* Correspondence: jose.baltazarguerra@animaeducacao.com.br

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the actions of the Invisible Cities Project (ICP) as an example of social innovation and as a way of giving visibility to vulnerable communities. Initially, a theoretical framework was established to understand the possibilities of the visibility of isolated and poor communities located within the urban setting. This framework was established based on the literature that addresses the role of social innovation in cities. Then, participant observations were made in a community to analyze the initiatives that are part of the ICP. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted; these interviews reported the lived experiences of participants involved in the project through the narratives of the community members. Drawing from the specialized literature, it was found that this project carries out various aspects of social innovation, such as social visibility, empowerment, the articulation of different actors in society, social inclusion, and the improvement of the urban public space. The project also addresses a variety of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as eradicating poverty, promoting health and well-being, reducing inequalities, and fostering more sustainable cities and communities.

Keywords: social innovation; vulnerable communities; invisible cities; well-being; learning; construction of knowledge; SDGs

1. Introduction

Urban spaces, which are central to the unfolding of policies and projects by influential agents, reflect social inequalities, manifesting in social invisibility, exclusion, and socio-spatial segregation, especially in Latin America [1–3]. This segregation illustrates the disconnection of communities from urbanization benefits, deepening social inequalities [4]. In Brazil, extreme poverty affects 26.5% of the population, translating to about 55 million people living on less than USD 5.5 a day, which is a condition that strips them of fundamental rights guaranteed by the 1988 Federal Constitution [5,6]. This situation not only highlights material disparities but also undermines the citizenship and societal integration of these individuals, pushing them to society's margins [7].

Finding ways to intervene in the historical process of social exclusion and the social problems arising from it is a response to the state's inability to solve them [8]. Given this, several social actors have been mobilized to find new answers that may cause some type of change in the causes and consequences of these problems [9]. In this sense, modern cities are presented as complex spaces, where different actors meet. The city includes the

rich and poor, private and public, and different cultures; their contrasting differences are contained within a single space. The city can be seen as a space of contrasts, which ends up producing problems for which no one is responsible [10]. In this sense, the authors of [11–17] identify the need to understand social innovations and to understand how their consolidation occurs in cities.

While traditional innovation is acknowledged, the complexity of social problems requires new solutions, as noted by [18]. Research into social innovation, spotlighted after publications by [19,20], is vital for generating social value and addressing needs unmet by market failures [18]. Despite the benefits of technical innovation research, Ref. [12] emphasizes the need for theoretical advancement in social innovation to tackle social change. This effort is crucial for creating knowledge about innovation processes and tools for urban transformation; in [13], the authors highlight its importance in the current context. Additionally, the issue of social invisibility, where individuals are obscured by social and economic inequalities and violence, denies them identity, basic services, and fundamental rights, hindering their citizenship [12,13,18–20].

To explore how social innovation can enhance the visibility of vulnerable communities, this study introduces the Invisible Cities Project (ICP), which was initiated in 2012 in Florianópolis, Brazil. Florianópolis, a city marked by contrasting social realities, houses the Frei Damião community in its metropolitan area, which has the lowest Human Development Index in Santa Catarina. The 2010 demographic census reported approximately 1474 households within this community [21], which has been recognized for its profound issues related to poverty, lack of infrastructure, neglect, and violence [22]. Social innovation, distinct from traditional forms, plays a crucial role in addressing challenges in education, health, and social business, and proves essential for social inclusion and enhancing the quality of life of vulnerable populations through initiatives led by civil society organizations [23–32].

Cities are urged to implement strategies to enhance livability and foster environments where individuals can thrive. Achieving this requires sustainable policies and green investments, as well as political stability and efficient public spending [33]. Furthermore, these efforts must align with global priorities, as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize poverty reduction, health and well-being promotion, inequality reduction, and fostering sustainable cities and communities. By adopting sustainable urban development policies, cities can align with these goals, ensuring livability today while also laying the groundwork for inclusive and resilient futures.

The impact of social innovation requires an understanding of optimal practices and a pedagogical approach: (1) Successful projects emphasize creating new human interactions, social structures, and relations aimed at enhancing human and natural quality of life, advocating for the sustainable preservation of the natural world and dignified human life as guiding principles [34–36]. (2) Unlike traditional education models, social innovation promotes a reciprocal teaching–learning process, valuing knowledge from all participants, including inherited and experientially gained insights. This approach highlights the importance of learning from the reality of territories and the resilience of peripheral communities, recognizing that even the simplest individuals possess valuable knowledge [37].

Social innovation brings together different forms of action in its projects; its procedures must be oriented toward the promotion of human dignity and natural sustainability. Therefore, human beings and nature should not be considered and treated instrumentally. The desired procedures for social innovation should guide the "means" aiming to achieve the best "ends" for the human and natural world. As for the relationship between social innovation and knowledge, it is clear that the teaching–learning process must actively involve all participants in social action. The generation and transfer of experiences and knowledge should not be conducted without interaction, sharing, and socialization between the subjects participating in the social project.

To conclude this section, it is important to emphasize that there is alignment between social innovation and sustainable development, as both share the goal of creating solutions that are economically viable, socially inclusive, and ecologically responsible. The authors

of Ref. [38] demonstrate the interaction between social innovation and SDGs, showing that social innovation supports the three dimensions of sustainability: economy, society, and environment. In the economic dimension, social innovation focuses on systemic problems like poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation, which require new approaches and innovative, sustainable business models. Solutions are often designed to generate social and economic value, promoting community resilience and driving sustainable business models like cooperatives, NGOs, public institutions, civil society organizations, companies, and social enterprises [39], all of which have positive impacts in environmental, social, and economic areas.

Regarding inclusive solutions, many social innovations involve marginalized groups in the process of creating and implementing solutions, ensuring that no one is left behind; these innovations align with the principles of sustainable development. This is supported by [40–42], who highlight that social innovation provides multifaceted solutions that contribute to sustainable development and achieving SDGs [43]. They emphasize the role of collaborative models, multi-stakeholder engagement, and the importance of integrating strategies across different levels of action. Thus, social innovation can serve as an essential tool to address economic, social, and environmental challenges in an innovative and sustainable manner.

2. Theoretical Framework

At different times in history and in different societies, human beings have used innovation as a possibility to face the most diverse vicissitudes. However, with scientific–technological development, emerging in modernity and consolidated in the contemporary period, there was a significant improvement in innovation strategies. Incidentally, with the expansion of capitalism and the emergence of economic crises, new models of rationality are applied in the market economy. This leads to the problematization of innovation as a decisive point for cycles of prosperity in the market sphere. In his economic analyses, Joseph Schumpeter discusses technological innovation in an unprecedented way. For this theorist, under capitalism, economic development follows cycles that alternate moments of economic prosperity and crisis.

Therefore, the achievement of economic prosperity, marked for example by offering new products and creating artifacts, services, and techniques that aim to both supply and generate new needs, would only be viable with development and technological improvement and the participation of the figure of the "genius" with an entrepreneurial and competitive vision. In other words, it is possible to infer from Schumpeter's writings that (technological/economic) innovation is only complete when there is a commercial transaction involving some invention that supplies and generates demands in the market sphere, producing competitive advantages and more favorable conditions for consumption by everyone who is not excluded from the economic game [44–47].

2.1. Social Innovation

It should be noted that the result of these technological and economic advances is not within reach of the entire population due to the difficulty of access due to economic and social issues, even if they participate in the production process. Thus, exclusion processes and growing social inequality are revealing a perverse model that excludes the less favored strata even when it claims to include them in the legal, political, and economic order [48–51]. As a field of study, social innovation presents a polysemy of concepts fragmented by different currents and fields of knowledge, which denotes both the need for the consolidation of the area of study and epistemological validation and the varied space for scientific investigations with expressive social richness [12,14–17,52–54].

The authors of Ref. [55] state that in social innovations, under certain circumstances, people use creative capabilities and they project a reality to create and develop new forms of social organization. The authors of Ref. [56] agree that there is a lack of theoretical consensus on what social innovation is about. However, these authors identified that the

collaborative process and, therefore, the interaction between actors for the development of social innovation, is the common point between the concepts, and that it can take the form of networks, systems, and clusters responsible for organizing communities that are considered peripheral [57–59]. Some concepts of social innovation focus on the process and the result of innovations [60,61]. The concepts that guide social innovation toward a result of the solution applied to a social demand seem to emphasize the utilitarian character of innovation, without the need to commit to structural changes about the major problems that plague today's societies [18,36,62]. In turn, there are concepts based on the mechanisms that permeate the process of social innovation [12,63–65], which include training, mobilization, and effective strategies for social inclusion [66,67].

Mutatis mutandis, both from the point of view of theory and social action, the spectrum of social innovation reveals the intention to create a social impact that generates greater levels of individual and collective autonomy, especially in the most socially and economically vulnerable territories. Consistent with this perspective, scholars assert that social innovation has as its central purposes sustainable development, inclusion, equity, and the broad granting of rights. More specifically, the consolidation of sustainable parameters from an economic, environmental, and social point of view, and the promoters of the inclusion of poorer individuals and communities, provide emancipatory states through which people can access the condition of a more dignified life. However, the practice of equity and the consolidation of fundamental rights are essential for social innovations to materialize organically and sustainably in our societies, especially because the promotion of ethical, political, and economic recognition of the most impoverished strata of society should not do without more egalitarian standards of social justice [14,55,67–71].

For them, social innovations are expressed from the following dimensions: incremental innovation, institutional innovation, and disruptive innovation. In summary: (a) Incremental innovation, about goods and services, is carried out by individuals or by organizations, which aim to meet diverse social demands. In this context, social innovation can be carried out through formal or informal experiments; (b) at the institutional level, there is the intention (when necessary) to reorient the social and economic structures to conform them to the transforming purposes and values of society. This can lead to a paradigm shift in which social, ethical, and solidary purposes take precedence over purely marketing concerns. However, economic viability and sustainability can never be neglected; (c) disruptive innovation aims, above all, to generate transformations in the logic of power. In other words, in this context, social innovations take place through social actions and projects that enable the establishment of more equitable relationships between the different social actors in organized civil society. It is in this sphere that, for example, social movements and social networks act and public policies are implemented that seek to subvert the most unjust structures of society and the state. Disruptive social innovation can, through an organic social organization, propose actions aimed at reducing inequalities and expanding the inclusion of less favored strata [54,72,73].

In summary, there is a significant adherence between the three dimensions of social innovation (incremental innovation, institutional innovation, and disruptive innovation) and the four exposed purposes (sustainable development, inclusion, equity, and broad granting of rights). Integral sustainability, which guarantees the generation of environmental/social balance and the perpetuation of social actions, together with the idealization and implementation of equitable and fair inclusion processes, are generators of conditions for a dignified and more emancipated life. To this end, social innovation (incremental, institutional, and disruptive) can act as a catalyst for impact actions in different social spaces such as diverse communities, cities, etc., acting in a transformative way.

Continuing the discussion on the positive impacts generated by social innovation, significant transformations across several fronts are recognized: (1) training opportunities and income generation, where social innovation plays a crucial role by providing training and the necessary skills for individuals to enter the labor market or to start their own businesses, thereby boosting the local economy and improving living standards; (2) em-

powerment and social visibility, with initiatives that encourage the active participation of marginalized communities, giving them a voice and making their needs and challenges visible to society at large, thus broadening the recognition of these groups and stimulating the construction of a more inclusive and equitable society; (3) promotion of health and prevention of risks and diseases, through projects that implement strategies to increase access to health services, educate the population about healthy practices, and prevent diseases, contributing to general well-being and reducing inequalities in health access; (4) education and culture, promoting alternative and inclusive teaching methodologies that value cultural diversity and stimulate critical thinking and creativity, contributing to the development of more aware and prepared citizens; (5) urbanization and infrastructure, with projects capable of transforming urban spaces, improving access to basic services and the quality of life in cities through the implementation of sustainable and inclusive solutions, especially those which benefit the most vulnerable communities.

Revealing an analytical effort and the intention to propose investigative categories to scrutinize the experiences of social impact, Ref. [74] developed studies with the Réseau Québécoi en Innovation Sociale (RQIS) and presented a model of the evaluation of the social innovation process centered on the role played by the social actors in each phase of this process. Unlike other proposals for the analysis of social innovation, the model recognizes the importance of the contribution of each function performed by social actors, and that it is a factor that corroborates the realization of innovation. The authors of Ref. [74] classify the role played by social actors into four types: (i) catalysts, (ii) funders, (iii) supporting partners, and (iv) users/beneficiaries of social innovation. They elucidate that the trajectories of the social innovation process are close to each other regardless of their origin, whether from the private, public, or voluntary sector, or the social economy. For these authors, social innovation processes start with a critical situation. According to these theorists, it is necessary to adopt both formal and informal strategies to solve the problems. Innovation, according to this logic, can be appropriated by a community, organization, or institution. The model proposed by [74], illustrated in Figure 1, is divided into four phases: (i) emergence, (ii) experimentation, (iii) appropriation, and (iv) diffusion.
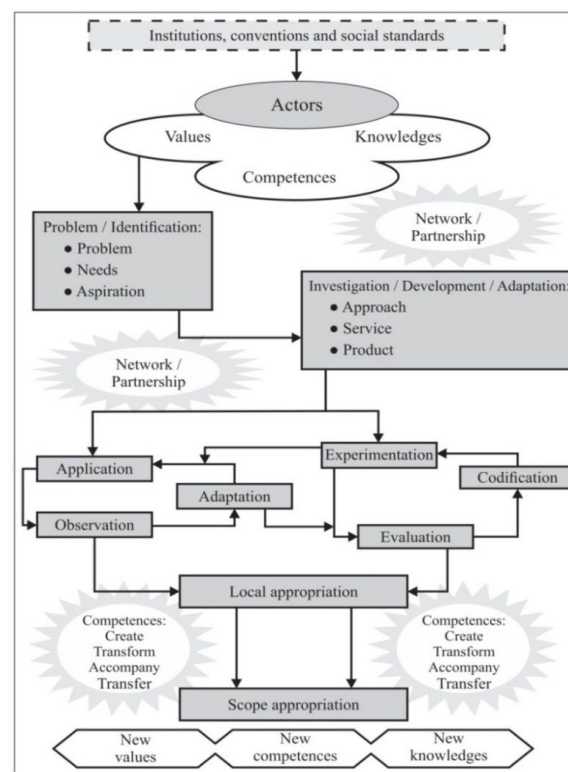
Figure 1. Global model of the social innovation process. Source: adapted from [75].

As it appears in the model, social innovation goes far beyond the intentions arising from the Schumpeterian paradigm of innovation. This is especially because, in social innovations, processes and results focus on social development and prioritize the rescue of the right to a dignified life for individuals and collectivities (various social groups, communities, etc.). Technological and organizational innovation (from the Schumpeterian matrix) seeks above all to generate economic development and competitive advantages within the market. Furthermore, social innovation cuts across collectivity and changes in social relations so that various social actors, especially those who directly receive the benefits of this innovation, can participate in the joint construction of a new solution, or the improvement or adaptation of an existing solution for social problems. In this situation, there is the creation of access to greater levels of individual and collective autonomy through economic and political–social development. Therefore, social innovation actions are about promoting the identity and recognition of individuals through the construction of the experience of belonging (in the professional sphere, but also in the community, the city, etc.) in the different phases of the inclusive process [69]. To this end, it is necessary to commit to social innovation with sustainable living that enables inclusive and equitable actions that generate empowerment so that people develop their potential, which leads them to become subjects capable of participating and actively intervening in their territories.

Social innovations can be applied to reduce inequalities and social exclusions through innovative activities and services offered to communities [15]. The authors of Ref. [75] state that social innovations should provide the satisfaction of social needs in terms of increasing income, improving employment, and improving health and education conditions. In addition to reducing exclusion and inequality, social actions must have some innovative characteristics (or at least be new in the applied context), must be implemented (and not just ideas), and must be effective (at least partially achieve the intended objectives). Citizen empowerment is also another important path to reducing exclusion and inequalities. In addition to the literature presented here, other studies contributed to the organization of a framework with main pathways for social innovation in favor of invisible cities (Table 1).

Table 1. Social innovation pathways and expected achievements.

Pathways for Social Innovation	References	Description
Creativity and project reality	[55]	The authors of Ref. [55] state that, under certain circumstances, people use creative capabilities and project reality to create and develop new forms of social organization.
Collaboration between individuals	[57–59,76]	The collaborative process and, therefore, the interaction between actors for the development of social innovation is the common point between the concepts and it can take the form of networks, systems, and clusters.
Training and mobilization	[12,63–66]	There are concepts based on the mechanisms that permeate the process of social innovation, which include training, mobilization, and social inclusion.
Increase in formal employment and incorporation of informal economic activities (informal economic activities)	[77]	Social exclusion in communities increases informal economic activity. These activities provide access to essential goods and services in communities. These activities are a reaction to the top-down structure of the economy. Initiatives are needed to incorporate local informal economies, through a peaceful process, prioritizing social inclusion and job creation in communities.
Build a knowledge and learning base in the community	[78]	Knowledge and learning are important to provide local answers to local problems, building a knowledge–learning base that can be of value to other cities.
Technology for social change	[79–82]	Technology in a broader sense, or specifically information and communication technology (ICT), is the core element for the transformation of cities. These technologies can contribute to reducing distances within the urban environment, allowing easier and faster access to education and health, for example.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Expected Achievements	References	Description
Empowerment of community citizens	[83]	The empowerment of individuals within communities can contribute to changing their reality.
Satisfy social needs (e.g., employment, health, education, etc.)	[75,84]	Social innovation actions and initiatives must provide an improvement in the quality of life of individuals, through the improvement of income, increase in employment, and improvement in the quality of education and health, among others.
Reduction of vulnerabilities and reduction of the marginalization of individuals.	[11,56,85,86]	It is necessary to assume that, although social innovations can occur to solve problems considered important for all social strata, people who belong to marginalized social groups and are in a situation of social vulnerability are the ones who need innovations that reduce social disparities the most."The poor are constantly included, using different orders, in the node that excludes them, generating the feeling of individual guilt for exclusion" [86].

The paths of social innovation that can contribute to the social inclusion of individuals and collectivities in the urban context were identified. Six important paths for social innovation were found in the literature to give visibility to vulnerable communities. Creativity and project-based reality, or project-oriented thinking, are highlighted. In this sense, it is necessary to use creativity to develop projects that improve the quality of life in communities [55]. Collaboration between individuals is another identified point. The individuals of a community must work together, creating collaboration networks, projects, groups, and associations that allow their interaction and the feeling of belonging to the process of innovative social action.

The training of community subjects through courses that can increase employability and generate income is also a point of great relevance. Many excluded or isolated communities in the urban context have individuals with low schooling. Projects and actions that can improve levels of formal education and professionalization (technical training, for example) in communities can greatly contribute to economic and social inclusion [12,63–66,76]. This pathway is also related to the construction of a knowledge and learning base within the community [72] and the use of technologies, especially information and communication technology (ICT), for social change [79–82]. In this case, technological training gains an emancipatory character, as it enables empowement through access to knowledge and, in the future, to the more specialized formal job market.

Through these pathways, communities will be able to achieve greater economic and social autonomy in the urban context, highlighted in the literature as (i) the empowerment of citizens through the expansion of its social visibility, greater identification with the community, and the generation of higher levels of quality of life [83]; (ii) the satisfaction of their social needs, such as employability, improved access to health, better education and transport conditions, among others [75,84]; and thus (iii) the achievement of inclusive development through the reduction of vulnerabilities and the decrease in the marginalization of individuals [10,56,84,86].

Based on the above, the concept of "social innovation" found in Ref. [87] gathers elements cited by most authors and is more suited to the interests of the present study, that is, "social innovation" comprises actions that aim to promote the integral well-being of the subjects and the community, through learning and the construction of knowledge collectively and procedurally. The investigative spectrum proposed by the author comprises both the theoretical construct of social innovation and the projects and actions that aim to integrally (harmoniously articulating each point of the process) carry out creative transformations in the social space that reduce the levels of vulnerability of the poorest strata of society. Thus, it is highlighted that the impacts of social innovation are vast and multidimensional, contributing to the construction of a fairer, sustainable, and inclusive society, which have already been mentioned before. These include training opportunities and income generation; empowerment and social visibility; health promotion and risk and disease prevention; education and culture; and urbanization and infrastructure.

2.2. Cities: The Phenomenon of Social Invisibility

Cities are unique spaces and the stage for multiple social actors who are characterized by their aspirations and activities. This concept of the city promotes the idea that these actors are agents responsible for producing an urban space [1]. From this perspective, the agents producing the urban space materialize in classifications, directing their activities towards socioeconomic purposes a priori [2].

In this way, the agents responsible for producing the characteristics and activities of cities can be considered basically through five classifications: (1) the state, (2) real estate companies, (3) large landowners, (4) large holders of the means of production, and (5) the excluded social classes [1,88]. Notably, the first (1) and the last (5) of these agents directly reflect the scenario of cities, that is, the state is responsible for streamlining the production process of cities, and the social communities are excluded from this 'macro' process.

As a result of this process, which is dictated by agents who produce the space of cities, several agendas and phenomena arise to be debated, analyzed, and even questioned, such as the phenomenon of socio-spatial segregation, or socio-environmental degradation [89]. As a result, cities become spaces of inequality, reproducing the global scenario of inequality, promoting spaces characteristic of the poor classes, and continuing the process of inequality and invisibility [90].

The process of socio-spatial segregation and social invisibility is characterized by several factors, among them, the lack of interest of the so-called space-producing agents in cooperating with less favored areas, making them peripheral and marginalized, distanced from social justice [90]. In this way, a parallel phenomenon takes place, in which cities also undergo a scenario of invisibility; in a single space, there is the visible and invisible city, the legal and illegal city [91].

However, to mitigate these negative characteristics, public and private policies must be directed at promoting innovations capable of attracting or connecting the producing agents to the less favored classes, the poor [92]. In this way, the scenario of cities, considering urban and rural peculiarities, lacks new perspectives, outlooks, and projects that may be able to transform these realities, promoting a leap from invisible, excluding, and segregationist cities, to sustainable, fair, and inclusive cities [89]. Thus, among the various possibilities that may exist, it is necessary that the public management of cities, especially those that are subsidized, is supported with studies and innovative techniques. It is necessary to keep in mind that innovations are characterized by new perspectives of thinking about solutions to certain problems, and in this case cities [88].

In this context, a historical moment is highlighted, which is the industrialization process, in which cities began to become powerful magnets, attracting several other cities and populations to the detriment of innovations and new means of production [93]. This scenario showed that whenever there are new attractions, innovations, and other elements that stand out, new perspectives and policies are directed towards a certain space, the cities.

3. Research Methods

This section will deal with the study object, and the IC project, as well as the way to collect and process the data necessary for the accomplishment of this research.

3.1. Study Object

To contextualize the study, in 2010, in the last Brazilian census [21], Brazil had 5570 municipalities. The Municipality of Palhoça, in 2010, occupied 193rd place in the number of inhabitants and 2733rd place in the schooling rate of students who were from 6 to 14 years old. Based on data from 2020, the Municipality of Palhoça occupies the 1180th place in GDP (gross domestic product) per capita and 2619th place in infant mortality.

The object of this study is the Invisible Cities Project, which develops social impact actions in vulnerable communities. The community to be studied here is Frei Damião, located in the municipality of Palhoça, in the state of Santa Catarina/Brazil. This project began in 2012 from the personal experience of the director, who was invited to photograph

poor communities in this metropolitan region and was faced with situations of survival and the deprivation of fundamental rights, which were very far from his socioeconomic reality.

The Frei Damião community began to form socio-spatially in 1993 [22] from the irregular occupation of land located in the municipality of Palhoça, in a flooded region. The author of [22] considers that the Frei Damião community is a socially vulnerable community in the municipality that presents the worst situation of poverty, infrastructure, abandonment, and violence. In this community, there are 1474 households according to data from the 2010 demographic census [21], whose Human Development Unit (UHDM) calculated the Municipal Human Development Index (HDI) at 0.638 [94]. Today, in this community there are families from other Brazilian states and other countries, such as Haiti, Venezuela, and Senegal. The Invisible Cities Project identifies itself as a business that sells t-shirts, accessories, and other products, and the proceeds obtained through these sales are used to fund social impact actions.

At the beginning of the project, given the urgent basic needs of the residents, the project started selling t-shirts with prints made from the artistic reinterpretation of photographs taken of people in the community itself. The money raised from the sale of t-shirts and donations was used to buy basic food baskets and hygiene materials. Gradually, the project evolved and began to promote other activities in the locations served. In addition, an incubator was set up in the Frei Damião community, where courses were offered to women, such as embroidery and clothing customization, to develop an entire clothing collection within the community.

Currently, the social impact actions promoted by the project in the community involve the work of volunteers, people from the community itself, partnerships with companies and other institutions, as well as the collection of donations. Among the actions promoted by the project, it is worth highlighting the health promotion actions, with attention to pregnant women and children, the treatment of infectious diseases, referrals for exams, oral health, the improvement of housing conditions, the control of zoonoses, and the community surroundings [95]. There is also a concern about promoting leisure and cultural and informational activities, such as the cultural kombi and the installation of a free Wi-Fi internet network.

### 3.2. Data Collection and Processing

The data collected for the present study were categorized into secondary and primary data. Secondary data were obtained through document research, involving the Invisible Cities Project (ICP) website, electronic social networks such as Instagram and the Facebook page, as well as photographs, videos, and records of activities that occurred in the ICP. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview is a data collection technique organized through a script that combines open and closed questions about the investigated phenomenon, allowing for the expansion of the topic without being limited to the initial question [96].

To ensure comprehensive coverage of the information gathered in the interviews, the snowball sampling strategy was adopted [97]. This technique starts with the selection of preliminary respondents, chosen by the researcher for their extensive knowledge of the phenomenon under study. In this case, those selected were the director, a volunteer, and a community resident who benefited from the project. These initial participants are encouraged to suggest other potential interviewees. The procedure is repeated, creating a progressive chain of referrals, until the data saturation point is reached—the moment when new interviews cease to add significant value to the research. In the end, a total of 18 respondents were obtained, including the director, volunteers/partners, and beneficiaries (community residents), selected based on their engagement with the project. The duration of each interview was spontaneous, without any time limitation. All interviews were recorded in a digital audio file format and later transcribed, with the recording of these sessions duly permitted by all respondents.

An informed consent form was implemented to explain the use of data to interviewees, ensuring the protection of these data. Aiming to anonymize the profile and maintain the confidentiality of the identities of the research interviewees, specific codes were adopted for the analysis and interpretation of the data: D (for the project director), VP (for volunteers/partners), and R (for benefited community residents). Thus, the interviewees were designated in the research with coded identifiers, such as D, VP1 to VP12, and R1 to R5. The study adopted a cross-sectional approach for data collection, conducted at a specific single period. This methodology was chosen because the ICP began its activities in 2012, and the analysis covered the period from the start of the project to the end of data collection (2022).

Primary data were also collected through participant observation during the activities of the ICP. This method is in line with the qualitative research approach, offering the researcher an opportunity for deeper and extended immersion in the context of the field of study, facilitating direct contact with individuals who are part of that environment.

The data analysis was carried out through the method of data triangulation, which aims to mitigate potential biases in the analysis, which is especially relevant in qualitative research characterized by interpretative analysis processes. Triangulation involves integrating various data sources, allowing the phenomenon under study to be examined from different perspectives, times, spaces, and subjects. This approach can reveal significant insights about the study object, contributing to the internal and external validity of the results. In this study, triangulation was implemented by combining data from semi-structured interviews, document research, and participant observation, as illustrated in Figure 2.
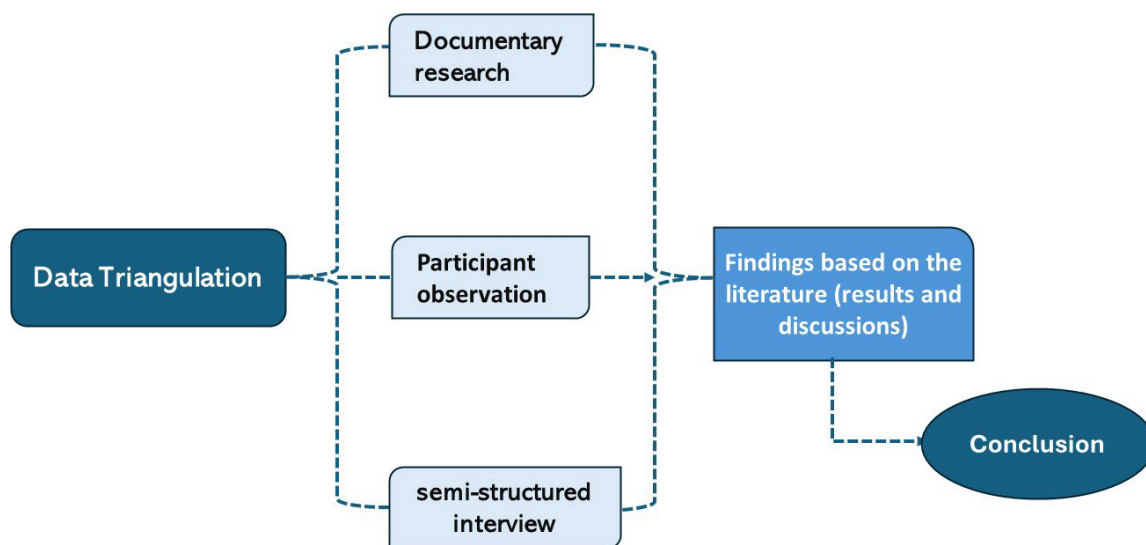
Figure 2. Data triangulation process.

In the subsequent sections, concerning the Sections 4 and 5, we will adopt the impacts of social innovation, as previously mentioned, as categories of analysis: training opportunities and income generation; empowerment and social visibility; health promotion and risk and disease prevention; education and culture; and urbanization and infrastructure. This enables us to organize the empirical study in comparison with the literature.

4. Results

Regarding the impact of training opportunities and income generation, it can be said that in the view of the interviewees, residents, volunteers, partners, and the project director, the training sessions significantly transcend the mere transmission of technical knowledge. They highlight that the workshops offer much more: they are unique opportunities for building and strengthening new social bonds, catalyzing significant changes in both the personal life and social relations of those involved. These meetings, along with other activities, are celebrated not just as moments of learning, but as true bridges for integration

and mutual support. Thus, the core of social innovation focuses on inclusive and transformative processes, engaging various participants at each of their stages, and reaffirming the commitment to sustainable and comprehensive social transformation.

According to R1, the bracelet-making and embroidery classes provided a valuable additional source of income for their family, which at the time depended solely on the Bolsa Família program, a government subsidy aimed at low-income families in Brazil, especially since her husband was unemployed. R1 highlighted the impossibility of working outside the home due to the need to take care of the children. This opportunity to generate income was so crucial for their family that her husband began to help with the bracelet making and even learned to embroider. R1 also emphasized the importance of this initiative for her, not just as a source of income, but also as a means to assert her independence, make decisions on her own, and occupy her free time productively. R3 echoed this perspective, noting that the Invisible Cities Project opened doors to new knowledge and presented itself as a viable alternative to supplement income, in addition to their current employment.

Regarding empowerment and social visibility as impacts of the ICP, it is emphasized that in the testimonies gathered during interviews, complemented by records of participant observation and documents, the significance of the Invisible Cities Project's initiatives in transforming the perception of socially vulnerable communities, which are often stigmatized merely as communities of violence and poverty in the mainstream media, is emphasized. The Invisible Cities Project stands out for its ability to increase the social visibility of these communities, using strategies such as photographic exhibitions, talks on lived experiences, the sale of brand products, as well as active promotion on social networks and the project's website.

During the interviews, several volunteers and partners mentioned having become aware of the project's initiatives through Instagram, highlighting the importance of online visibility. This exposure is crucial for revealing to society that these communities house individuals with full rights to life and the capacity to actively shape their narratives, and who need the right opportunities. Furthermore, this visibility positively impacts the self-esteem of the residents, enabling them to demonstrate that their living places have potential far beyond the negative stereotypes commonly associated with favelas. To deepen the mentioned analyses, it is important to highlight the testimonies of two interviewees:

"And I think bringing the outside world closer to that community already makes a difference, I think they start to see that they also belong to society, that they are not excluded within the community because they are there, and they are excluded. I think there are people interested in their success, or in some way, I think deep down that this impacted some people, now what each one of them did with this, took advantage of it, we would have to investigate". VP3

"I think it's cool because it shows that something can come from here, right? That something good comes from here, showing that beyond people who are in need, there are also ordinary people, who can do any kind of thing". (R4)

Within the scope of health promotion and risk and disease prevention, the ICP drives a series of initiatives with significant social impact. Leveraging volunteer work, direct community engagement, donations, and strategic partnerships with companies and other institutions, the project stands out for its health-focused actions. These initiatives include health promotion with a special focus on the well-being of pregnant women and children, ensuring that this target audience receives adequate prenatal and child care for healthy development; the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases by implementing preventive measures and effective treatments against diseases that can affect the community; referrals for diagnostic exams to facilitate access to essential medical examinations, promoting the early detection of health conditions; oral health care initiatives to improve the community's oral health, preventing dental diseases and promoting oral hygiene; the improvement of living conditions with efforts aimed at raising housing standards, aiming for healthier and

safer environments for residents; and zoonoses control actions to prevent and manage diseases transmitted by animals, protecting both human and animal health.

The ICP brought an educational and cultural revolution to the community, using innovative approaches to foster learning and access to culture. Imagine children watching movies for the first time on a screen set up in the streets, or the joy of exploring stories through books taken from a kombi turned into a traveling library. The magic of storytelling, the harmony of music, and the discovery of the body and mind through yoga classes were some of the initiatives that brought new colors and hopes to these places. The activity called "Descobrincando" became a gateway to playful learning, where play mixes with education, unlocking a world of creativity and knowledge. Moreover, the concern to integrate the communities through leisure activities, culture, and access to information took shape in the cultural kombi, a symbol of resistance and transformation, and in the installation of Wi-Fi networks, breaking digital barriers and connecting residents to a universe of online possibilities.

The urbanization and infrastructure interventions carried out by the project appear as a strong indication of innovation in the community for the project director, volunteers, and residents. A space that was previously abandoned became a space for leisure and socialization for children and adults with the construction of the public square "Praça Cidades Invisíveis" and the improvement of living conditions with the pavement of the stretch called "beco (alleyway)" by the residents. These inferences can be observed in the statements of the residents of Frei Damião:

> "The beginning of our street that was made, this little square that was involved in the project, man, a lot. Our front became wonderful after the project entered here. If it wasn't for the project, this would not even be the way it is. Everything through the project, so this is wonderful for us." (R2)

> "If it weren't for D, we wouldn't have the little square for the kids to play and our alley would not be paved. It was good even for the kids to leave school. Arriving and leaving school was bad until the children left school with their shoes all dirty".

It should be added that part of the interviews with the residents of Frei Damião were held at Praça Cidades Invisíveis, which allowed the researchers to observe that there were residents gathered in the square to drink "chimarrão"; people who passed by stopped to talk and there were also children playing in that space without an ICP action taking place.

Regarding the urbanization of that space, it is also possible to say that there was a change in the cultural practice around the social relations observed in that meeting space. The authors of [59] affirm that social innovation positively impacts places not only due to changes in the physical structure and characteristics of the landscape but also because it involves the renewal of cultural values and practices that permeate social relations at different levels.

For the pavement, the ICP obtained the necessary materials for the work and was concerned with bringing together the men of the community to perform the service. It is worthy of note that at a given moment, the ICP realized the need to involve more of the residents of the community in carrying out actions for the community so that it could generate some kind of social transformation, as reported below by VP2. Thus, it was necessary to instigate these people to leave the condition of being recipients of improvement, which constitutes assistance, and to become agents in some way in the transformation process. This involvement generated for the residents the improvement of the structural conditions of the surroundings, as well as the learning of another trade and the remuneration for the work: "My husband started laying the tiles. He never worked with that "(M1).

> "This pavement was cool because the pavement in the alley is a place where we used to do the actions. The project got the materials and we called the community to do the work, you know? This is very important because people participate in things, not only just get

*everything for free, so I thought it was cool that the project did it and D1 called the men
in the community to help put on the pavement and it was very cool". (VP2)*

D reports that he can perceive changes in the residents of the community who had
a greater involvement with the ICP, but that this is a long-term process. These people
have changed in terms of positioning themselves in front of others and developing self-
confidence, as can be seen below:

*"I managed in the long run, it was never in the short run. I always say that it is not
possible to be immediate in actions, that is why we avoided assistance, assistance always
generates only an immediate change, sometimes you give an essential food parcel, and you
get a smile from a family, but you do not generate transformation. So, the transformation I
saw was a transformation of years. I have been working year after year in the communities
and having contact with the families that we have seen a transformation in education,
in the way of positioning, in the way of believing in themselves, of thinking that "well,
now we can, so now we are going to create a grocery store", how it happens, I've heard
"after you started coming here we saw that it was possible" today it was a shack, today it
became a grocery store because they saw that there was this power inside them that was
possible (D)".*

In general, the perception of the interviewees about the urban interventions of the
ICP is that these changes provided a change in the social vision of the community. As the
Frei Damião community has a bad image, related to violence, poverty, and exclusion, the
change in the urban space, through interventions such as the revitalization of Praça Cidades
Invisíveis, improves the image of the community, both for residents, internal citizens, and
for the residents of the city from outside the community, external citizens. As reported, the
engagement and solidary participation of part of the community in actions related to the
project, as well as the positive change in the internal and external vision of the Frei Damião
territory, show that social innovation carried out as an articulated process can promote
impactful transformations in social life.

5. Discussion

The results indicate that throughout the existence of the ICP, an evolution in the struc-
turing of social actions was observed. This evolution was characterized by the increasing
effort to incorporate the community in the implementation of these actions, based on the
understanding that the active participation of the beneficiaries is essential for the realization
of social transformations. The analysis allows for the identification of a series of positive
impacts resulting from the ICP, evidenced both by the activities carried out with the com-
munity and by the narratives of the interviewed participants. The latter provides valuable
insight, offering personal perspectives that detail and directly corroborate the effects of the
project on the individuals involved. Table 2 summarizes the main social impacts recognized
within the ICP, establishing a connection between the social innovation pathways and the
expected achievements (Table 1), thereby promoting integration between the observed
practice and the underlying theoretical framework.

Table 2. Social innovation pathways and expected achievements.

Impact	Actions	Relation to Literature Framework—Pathways and Expected Achievements for Social Inclusion
Training and income generation opportunities	Promotion of training courses and income generation opportunities; cutting and sewing courses, serigraphy courses, cooking courses, bracelet making, embroidery courses, fabric painting workshops, support for other social projects; the possibility of generating income and having an activity to occupy in free time.	Collaboration between individuals [57,58,76]. Training and mobilization [12,63–66]. Increase in formal employment and incorporation of formal economic activities [77].

Table 2. *Cont.*

Impact	Actions	Relation to Literature Framework—Pathways and Expected Achievements for Social Inclusion
Empowerment and social visibility	Perception of changes in the people assisted in terms of positioning and self-esteem; new relationships of friendship and camaraderie.	Empowerment of community citizens [82]. Reducing vulnerabilities and reducing the marginalization of individuals [11,56,85,86]
Health promotion and risk and disease prevention	Health promotion actions; actions for health promotion and disease prevention, including dental treatment and zoonosis control.	Satisfy social needs (e.g., employment, health, education, etc.) [75,84].
Education and Culture	Learning from training courses; cinema sessions and theater presentations for children; cinema inside the favela; cultural estate with an internal library for borrowing books and storytelling, music, discovery, yoga classes; artistic interventions; internet access.	Creativity and project reality [33]. Build a knowledge and learning base in the community [78].
Urbanization and infrastructure	Artistic intervention in poor communities, building a public square, building a house, building a park; free access to the wireless internet data network for the community; paving, placing trash cans, paving streets; socialization and leisure spaces for people through urbanization; improving the quality of life with urbanization; teaching and learning space for children.	Technology for social change [78–82]

The training and courses carried out in the community, including courses on making costume jewelry, painting shirts and fabrics, and cooking courses, among others, provided an alternative to generating income for the participants. These economic activities, which are initially informal, are related to the need to generate income, due to the lack of resources to meet basic needs. According to [77], social exclusion in communities also increases informal economic activity. These activities can be seen from a positive perspective, as they arise from the need of individuals, that is, from local poverty itself, aiming to sustain and promote access to essential goods and services. Through the impact of training and courses presented here—but also in the following impact areas—it is evident that social innovation is present in different parts of the project, in the various actions of the community. However, economic sustainability and income generation for community members are essential points in facing the most harmful effects of poverty and inequality. As mentioned, sustainability makes a decisive contribution to the perpetuity of impactful social projects. The materialization of equitable and fair inclusion processes, which are generators of conditions for a dignified and more emancipated life, is the core of social innovation, with an impact on the community, the urban space, and the city [55,72,73].

Ref. [77] also states that informal activities are a manifestation of resistance to the traditional economic structure (top–down). According to this author, individuals feel excluded, which leads them to create their informal economic logic, creating their income generation mechanisms. However, it is necessary to incorporate local informal economies through a peaceful process of construction, prioritizing social and democratic inclusion and promoting the creation of formal jobs in communities. According to [98], the social inclusion process takes place on a multilevel scale. In this perspective, the scale of local development makes it possible to adopt or create solutions that enable the participation of people, like income generation, which would not be possible at the national or global scales. The authors of Ref. [99] argue that development needs to take into account local development to understand the causes of local socioeconomic disintegration and to understand the potential for action for recovery.

Another impact identified was the empowerment of individuals and the improvement of social visibility. According to [83], the empowerment of individuals has the potential to change the image of the environment in which they live, that is, the community, and also their image. This process can improve individuals' self-esteem and create a local identity, generating pride and a sense of belonging. The creation of new relationships was also observed in the ICP. Through actions such as courses and collective activities within the

community, participants were able to create new relationships and a more open attitude with their neighbors. The meeting through these activities, understood as positive actions, allowed a different interaction from the routine meetings of everyday life, such as those that take place in the street, market, bakery, or other common areas of the community. Regarding the visibility of the achievements of the ICP, the authors of Ref. [100] point out that Instagram proves to be an essential tool for education and engagement, and allows for rich and interactive communication, reaching a wide audience and facilitating important discussions.

The ICP focuses on education and culture; through the integration of various social activities, such as training courses, film and theater sessions for children, a community library for book lending and storytelling, music and yoga classrooms, artistic interventions, and access to the internet, everyone is supported and the residents of the community are active participants. These activities are only facilitated by the ICP's ability to establish partnerships and the voluntary commitment of individuals involved in the project, involving a wide network of collaborators, including companies, media influencers, visual artists, and volunteers [101]. This ability to "build bridges" between different sectors of society is crucial to promoting even community development, illustrating how collaboration between various social actors can increase efficiency and stimulate innovation [99], thus allowing the ICP to coordinate actors of various areas [53,63,71,84].

Regarding health promotion and disease prevention, these aspects are related to the satisfaction of basic social needs and are obtained through social innovation actions and initiatives to improve the quality of life of individuals. This is directly related to income-generating opportunities [75,102]. Thus, it is possible to identify a direct relationship between training and increased income generation opportunities, with health promotion, disease prevention, and access to education, among other basic social needs. As noted by [55], under certain circumstances, people use their creative abilities to transform the environment and develop new forms of social organization. This is in line with the need to work on creative processes within communities, and in line with educational and cultural actions. Building a community based on knowledge and learning is important to create solutions to local problems, through the individuals who inhabit the environment. According to [78], knowledge and learning are essential pathways to building a community based on the knowledge–learning relationship (knowledge-based).

The actions of the ICP have underscored the critical role of technologies in social transformation, with information and communication technology (ICT) playing a pivotal role in changing community infrastructure/urbanization and connecting individuals to the wider world [80–82]. These technologies assist in bridging gaps within the urban environment, facilitating access to education and health [79], and offer less traumatic ways of community integration, in contrast to the negative military strategies observed in Rio [96]. Initiatives for space production are viewed as essential to overcome the state's fragile presence and integrate urban spaces, addressing issues in the formation of states and cities in Latin America [37,102]. Community integration through technology and social innovation projects is highlighted as a pathway to cultural transformation and emancipation [103]. The ICP exemplifies local social innovation, fostering social inclusion and empowerment in marginalized communities, with its experiences serving as learning opportunities for others [11,14–16,74]. Parte superior do formulário

In terms of urbanization and infrastructure, the intersection between social innovation and sustainable cities, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, is critical. By integrating the principles of social innovation with sustainable urban development, we address challenges related to urbanization, infrastructure, and social justice. Initiatives such as innovative housing models, inclusive urban governance, and sustainable infrastructure create more equitable and livable spaces, enhancing access to essential resources and ensuring social justice. This approach helps to redefine social practices and mobilize various stakeholders to tackle complex urban challenges, such as climate change, unemployment, and social inequality. Social innovations encourage collaboration between the public and

private sectors and civil society, creating ecosystems that foster service integration and social inclusion, paving the way for sustainable cities through collaborative governance, technology, and creativity to address urban challenges [104–106]. Additionally, as explored in the study [106], social housing communities play a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices through social innovation, fostering resource circularity. The concepts of social innovation and circular economy represent a "sweet spot" at the intersection between them, which facilitates practical application and promotes an effective transition to more sustainable cities.

In short, in the project developed in the Frei Damião community, the process of social innovation is made up of different but complementary moments. The commercial character expressed in the sale of t-shirts includes economic sustainability and income generation. However, community involvement is much broader. The interaction between community members is part of a collective action that involves different social actors. Furthermore, as a whole, these practices should not be reduced to a mere gathering of people around a common cause, especially because the dialogical practice experienced in the relationship between community members (present in production, marketing, and entrepreneurship, but also leisure meetings and relaxed social interaction) reveals the growth of social ties. Unlike solipsism, the social life of the community is re-signified through a social business that drives empowerment and emancipation in each person involved in the process. The proof of this is the feeling of protagonism in business initiatives, as well as belonging and recognition in the community; such feelings signify that these actions, taken as a whole, constitute social innovation. It is noticed that in this community experience, social innovation happens as a social business, but also as an individual and collective transformation of the different actors involved. Hence, there is an ethical dimension of this social innovation: the community experience and the sharing of inclusive and solidary purposes generate transformations with an impact on the levels of participation, cooperation, empathy, affection, and appreciation [55,67–71].

6. Practical Implications and Recommendations

Moving towards a more inclusive and sustainable future necessitates guiding policymakers in the effective support of social innovation projects, particularly those demonstrating a significant impact on vulnerable communities. In this context, the ICP model emerges as a potentially transformative tool. Its applicability and success in different settings necessitate careful analysis. Discussing recommendations based on findings, this document aims to explore the model's scalability, highlighting potential challenges and identifying factors contributing to successful implementation across diverse communities.

This study provides insights into the role of social innovation in enhancing visibility and supporting vulnerable communities, with the Invisible Cities Project (ICP) as a case study. The ICP experience demonstrates the potential of social innovation projects to transform the realities of marginalized communities, promoting social inclusion, community development, and improvements in living conditions. Considering the findings of this study, we offer the following recommendations for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders interested in supporting or implementing similar social innovation projects.

For policymakers, we offer the following recommendations: provide financial and technical support to ensure sustainable funding and technical assistance for social innovation projects, recognizing them as crucial tools for community development and social inclusion; create favorable environments by establishing and maintaining regulatory and institutional environments that support social innovation, including simplifying procedures for the creation and operation of social initiatives; and form public–private partnerships to encourage collaboration between the public sector, private sector, and civil society in sharing resources, knowledge, and experiences, thereby enhancing the impact of social innovation projects.

For non-governmental organizations, we offer the following recommendations: prioritize community engagement by actively involving and participating with target communities in all project phases, from conception to implementation and evaluation, ensuring that solutions are co-created and directly relevant to the community's needs and desires; focus on sustainability and scalability by developing projects that not only meet immediate community needs but are also sustainable over the long term and can be scaled or adapted to benefit other vulnerable communities; and implement monitoring and evaluation by establishing robust systems to measure the impact of social innovation projects, allowing for continuous adjustments and improvements.

Regarding scalability, the ICP demonstrates a promising path for social innovation in vulnerable communities. However, its scalability to other communities requires the consideration of several factors: the local context, by adapting ICP actions to the cultural, economic, and social specificities of new communities; flexibility to adjust to different local challenges and opportunities; local strategic partnerships with civil society organizations, businesses, and governments to facilitate the adaptation and implementation of ICP actions in new contexts; securing financing to mobilize local resources to replicate ICP actions in other communities.

7. Conclusions

This study aimed to show the contribution of social innovation to the visibility of vulnerable communities located in the metropolitan region of Florianópolis, in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil, through the ICP. The work presented the actions and initiatives of the ICP that were developed in the Frei Damião community, in Florianópolis, Brazil, and reported the narratives of the community's residents who participated in the interventions.

The ICP stands out for its integrated and multidimensional approach, focusing on sustainable development, inclusion, equity, and the expansion of rights. It is differentiated by promoting a holistic vision aimed at long-term well-being, involving vulnerable communities in all stages of the process, from planning to execution, and seeking to empower individuals and communities, promoting autonomy and resilience. The IPC also emphasizes structural transformations to better meet social needs, reorienting economic and social structures, with a firm commitment to economic and environmental sustainability. This simultaneous focus on inclusion, sustainable development, and equity marks its distinction as an innovative and inclusive model of social innovation.

The ICP was initiated upon recognizing that individuals were living under conditions of social vulnerability and were neglected by institutions. The organization identified fashion as a strategy to fund its social actions through the sale of ICP brand t-shirts and other accessories. It is an entity in the process of consolidating itself as a social business, aiming to allocate all profits towards the execution of social actions and the development of training programs. Moreover, the ICP aligns with the principles that define the economic and social dimensions of a social enterprise.

To facilitate the description of the ICP's actions, documentary research was conducted on the ICP's website and social media platforms, coupled with participant observations and semi-structured interviews with residents of the Frei Damião community, volunteers, partners, and the ICP director. Through this methodology, it was possible to categorize the impacts of the ICP into five primary areas: (i) training and income generation, (ii) empowerment and social visibility, (iii) health promotion and risk and disease prevention, (iv) education and culture, and (v) urbanization and infrastructure development. Analyzing these impacts using theoretical frameworks revealed that the ICP is a social innovation initiative comprised of multiple smaller actions. The project aligns with critical dimensions of social innovation, including the empowerment of citizens, satisfaction of social needs, and inclusive development. Moreover, the project's evolution from a social business to a broader-scale initiative was apparent, reflecting its growth and expanded impact on the community. This transition underscores the dynamic nature of social innovation projects in responding to and evolving with community needs.

In this case study, it was possible to verify that social innovation is interwoven both by processes and by the achievement of results, and it is not possible to dissociate them. The process of social innovation is complex and demands a considerable amount of time to generate new social practices, new social relationships, or the strengthening of existing social ties. In addition, the realization of social innovation requires facing adversity and learning. With regard to the theory and the social practice experienced in the project, it can be seen that social innovation is not limited to a single action. As indicated, the different initiatives that make up diversified tasks gain a pedagogical dimension that culminates in a process that generates protagonism, commitment, belonging, companionship, solidarity, affection, and emancipation in the life of the community.

As with the actions promoted by the ICP, other social innovation projects can also provide conditions that favor empowerment and the fight against social inequality. The various social innovation actions must invariably seek to create conditions for people (individually) and communities to achieve greater levels of emancipation. However, there will always be many obstacles. For example, even if these conditions are provided, community members will not always be able to change the state they are in, out of fear, conformism, disenchantment, and/or discouragement. It is a challenge for social innovation to create alternatives to change this social situation.

The ICP's actions demonstrate the importance of the local scale of social innovation so that social transformations are built gradually. Even though a greater engagement of many members of the Frei Damião community was not possible, the local action of the ICP was important for the empowerment of several people in the community. In the project, social innovation also emerges as a possibility of alterity, because through social action it is possible to closely monitor people's lives, encourage them to exercise their autonomy, and become more economically, socially, politically, and ethically emancipated. In passing, it should be added that the internet and social networks played an important role in articulating social actors for the empirical context. However, future studies will be able to analyze the importance of social networks and the internet for the community, and their role as a space and practice of social innovation, seeking to identify mechanisms related to community integration. Equally important is future research on the interface between the arts and social innovation.

Regarding the limitations of this study, we acknowledge that cultural context significantly influences the success of the ICP, which potentially affects its replicability in different environments. The unique relationship between the project and the Frei Damião community suggests that replicating its outcomes in other contexts would require careful attention to local cultural and social specificities. Future research is recommended to explore how technology, particularly social media and the internet, can enhance social visibility and inclusion, by examining its role in community integration and as a practice of social innovation. Furthermore, the relationship between the arts and social innovation emerges as a promising area; we propose that the investigation of how artistic expressions can foster community integration and empowerment is worthwhile. This focus on the challenges and complexity of social innovation opens avenues for understanding how to adapt and extend similar projects across diverse cultural and social contexts.

To conclude the article, the Invisible Cities Project (ICP) exemplifies the alignment between social innovation and sustainable development in the Frei Damião community and works to empower vulnerable groups while promoting the three pillars of sustainability: economy, society, and environment. The project's integrated approach, which includes observations and interviews with residents, ensures that no one is left behind, and addresses goals like eradicating poverty, promoting health and well-being, reducing inequalities, and fostering sustainable cities. By collaborating with NGOs, public institutions, and companies, the ICP strengthens community ties and promotes sustainable business models such as cooperatives and social enterprises. Its evolution from a social enterprise to a broader initiative highlights the importance of collaborative strategies to overcome obstacles like fear and discouragement, encouraging autonomy and resilience among vulnerable

communities. The internet and social networks play a crucial role in enabling these social actors to work together, and future research should further explore the interaction between technology and the arts to improve inclusion and adapt innovative models to different cultural and social contexts, contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, such as poverty eradication, promoting health and well-being, reducing inequalities, and fostering more sustainable cities and communities.

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