

Projectification of social initiatives: a case study at the Rotary Club Barra Mansa-RJ

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ABSTRACT

Projectification contributes to improving management practices and enhancing the impact of social initiatives in the third sector. Although projectification has been widely examined as a structural phenomenon in third-sector organizations, limited empirical research has explored how small volunteer-based organizations operationalize projectification alongside the development of organizational competencies. Within this context, this paper examines how the progressive incorporation of project management practices can strengthen the institutional performance of a third-sector nongovernmental organization. An exploratory qualitative approach was adopted through a single-case study design, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The Rotary Club of Barra Mansa–RJ served as the unit of analysis, with particular attention to the Women’s Entrepreneurship Award Project (PERMSF). Thematic analysis revealed an organizational transition characterized by heterogeneous levels of project management maturity, ranging from intuitive and relationship-based practices to the formal adoption of tools such as project schedules, budget planning, performance indicators, and structured partnerships. Given the challenges commonly faced by social organizations, including resource constraints, accountability requirements, and the absence of structured impact evaluation mechanisms, the findings indicate that, when adapted to a volunteer-based organizational culture, projectification can enhance transparency, operational efficiency, stakeholder coordination, and long-term sustainability. The study concludes that the development of technical, behavioral, and contextual competencies is essential for consolidating this transformation and strengthening community impact. More broadly, the study contributes to a contextual refinement of projectification theory by demonstrating that, in volunteer-based organizations, projectification departs from a standardized process of managerial diffusion and instead takes the form of a strategic and cultural reconfiguration shaped by relational culture, volunteer governance, and organizational resource constraints.

Keywords: Projectification, Social Projects, Third Sector, Project Management, Project Skills.

¹ The authors of this manuscript certify that the paper is an outcome of our independent and original work. We have duly acknowledged all the sources from which the ideas and extracts have been taken, and we are responsible for any errors that may be discovered. The authors thank the editor of CYRUS Global Business Perspectives (CGBP), and anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of the manuscript and their insightful comments and suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

Social projects have assumed an increasingly central role amid the expansion of social inequalities and the limited capacity of the state to respond to the multiple demands of vulnerable communities (Silva, 2013; Cellerino, Mancini, Ahola, 2026). In many local contexts, they have become the primary mechanism for delivering social support, fostering community development, and promoting local empowerment. Recent studies indicate that, when properly structured, such projects consistently expand opportunities, improve living conditions, and reduce persistent vulnerabilities (Kaputa & Tembo, 2024).

Despite their recognized importance, third-sector organizations, nonprofit entities that operate independently of the state and the market while pursuing civic or philanthropic missions, continue to face structural and managerial challenges that compromise the continuity and effectiveness of their initiatives (Brzustewicz et al., 2022). Recurring issues identified in the literature include managerial deficiencies, competency gaps, weaknesses in accountability practices, and limitations in impact assessment (Oyekunle & Anibaloye, 2024; Rosamilha, Silva, & Penha, 2024). These challenges extend beyond operational concerns, directly affecting organizations' ability to generate consistent and sustainable outcomes.

Within this context, projectification, the process through which project logic progressively shapes organizational routines, managerial practices, and governance structures, has emerged as an important organizational response for improving coordination, professionalization, and the predictability of social initiatives (Lundin, 2016). Rather than simply increasing the number of projects undertaken, projectification institutionalizes routines, methods, and organizational structures that transform dispersed efforts into coordinated and strategically aligned actions (Wagner, Huemann, & Radujkovic, 2021).

Recent studies suggest that this transformation has reshaped governance processes, redefined relationships with funders, and intensified demands for accountability and measurable outcomes (Löfström, 2025). It is important to distinguish projectification from project management. Whereas project management refers to the application of technical methods and practices to individual projects, projectification represents a broader organizational transformation through which project logic becomes embedded in routines, governance arrangements, and decision-making processes (Maylor & Turkulainen, 2019).

Alongside this transformation, organizations increasingly require competencies suited to environments characterized by uncertainty, complex social demands, and intensive community collaboration (Cellerino, Mancini, Ahola, 2026). Managing social projects requires not only technical expertise but also relational capabilities, social sensitivity, and the ability to engage beneficiaries in the co-creation of solutions. These competencies have been consistently identified

as critical enablers of social innovation and strategic design processes (Nunes & Zurlo, 2023; Pilat, 2024).

Although projectification has been widely examined as a structural phenomenon across different organizational settings, limited empirical research has explored how small volunteer-based third-sector organizations operationalize projectification alongside the development of organizational competencies. This gap is particularly relevant because volunteer-based organizations operate under distinctive conditions characterized by limited resources, informal governance arrangements, and strong relational cultures, requiring project-based practices to be adapted rather than directly transferred from traditional organizational contexts. Understanding how projectification unfolds in these settings can therefore advance both projectification theory and knowledge on the management of third-sector organizations.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How does projectification emerge and become structured within a third-sector social organization? To answer this question, we conducted an exploratory qualitative single-case study of the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa (RJ), using semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis as complementary sources of evidence. The use of multiple data sources enables an in-depth understanding of organizational processes in a context that remains underexplored in the projectification literature (Yin, 2015). Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze how projectification unfolds within a nongovernmental organization, using the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa (RJ) as the empirical case.

The study is particularly relevant because, in many communities, social projects represent not merely complementary initiatives but essential responses to the absence or insufficiency of public policies addressing emerging social needs. By examining how projectification is enacted within a volunteer-based organization, this study contributes to a contextual refinement of projectification theory, demonstrating how project logic is adapted to organizations characterized by volunteer governance, relational cultures, and resource constraints. From a practical perspective, the findings also provide insights into how project-based practices can strengthen managerial capacity, organizational sustainability, and the long-term impact of social initiatives in the third sector.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The next section reviews the literature on projectification and competency development in third-sector organizations. The subsequent section describes the methodological procedures adopted in the study. The findings then examine the projectification trajectory of the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa, followed by a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social project management and success factors

Social projects have become increasingly important mechanisms for addressing complex societal challenges that exceed the operational capacity of governments, particularly in contexts characterized by inequality, social vulnerability, and limited public resources (Silva, 2013; Brzustewicz et al., 2022). Rather than merely delivering services, these initiatives mobilize stakeholders, strengthen community networks, and foster collaborative responses to local needs. Consequently, social projects have evolved from isolated interventions into strategic instruments for promoting community development and generating sustainable social value (Kaputa & Tembo, 2024; Lundin, 2016).

Despite their growing relevance, managing social projects remains considerably more challenging than managing projects in traditional organizational settings. Unlike private-sector projects, social initiatives pursue multidimensional objectives that combine social value creation, community engagement, institutional legitimacy, and financial sustainability (Zhai et al., 2025). Their success therefore depends not only on efficient project execution but also on the organization's ability to balance accountability requirements, stakeholder expectations, and long-term social impact (Brzustewicz et al., 2022; Oyekunle & Anibaloye, 2024).

Recent studies consistently identify managerial deficiencies as one of the principal barriers to the effectiveness of third-sector organizations. Weak planning processes, limited professionalization, fragmented decision-making, insufficient monitoring systems, and competency gaps frequently constrain organizational performance (Osadchaya, 2022; Rosamilha, Silva, & Penha, 2024). These limitations become even more critical as donors and funding agencies increasingly require transparent governance, systematic reporting, and evidence of measurable social outcomes (Oyekunle & Anibaloye, 2024). Consequently, social project management has shifted from a predominantly operational activity toward a strategic organizational capability.

Resource scarcity further amplifies these managerial challenges. Third-sector organizations typically operate under conditions of financial uncertainty while simultaneously responding to rapidly evolving community needs (Liñares-Zegarra & Wilson, 2024). Such environments require continuous adaptation, flexible decision-making, and efficient resource allocation (Rosamilha, Silva, & Penha, 2024). As external pressures intensify, organizations must develop management approaches capable of preserving their social mission while improving organizational performance and institutional sustainability.

The literature suggests that the success of social projects depends on a combination of technical, organizational, and relational factors rather than on project management techniques alone (Desjardins et al., 2026). Clear objectives, stakeholder engagement, effective coordination, accountability mechanisms, and adaptive governance have consistently been identified as critical success factors for achieving sustainable social outcomes (Oyekunle & Anibaloye, 2024; Kaputa

& Tembo, 2024). These findings indicate that managing social projects requires organizational capabilities that extend beyond the execution of individual initiatives, encompassing broader processes of learning, coordination, and institutional development.

Therefore, the effectiveness of social projects requires more than incremental enhancements to project management practices alone. This broader organizational transformation has been conceptualized in the literature as projectification, whereby project logic becomes embedded in organizational structures, managerial routines, and governance processes. The following section examines this phenomenon and its implications for the management of third-sector organizations.

Projectification in third-sector organizations

Projectification has emerged as one of the most significant organizational transformations affecting third-sector organizations over the past two decades. Rather than representing a simple increase in the number of projects undertaken, projectification refers to the progressive institutionalization of project logic as a dominant organizational principle, influencing governance structures, managerial routines, decision-making processes, and organizational culture (Lundin, 2016; Maylor & Turkulainen, 2019). Consequently, projects evolve from temporary operational instruments to strategic mechanisms through which organizations coordinate activities, mobilize resources, and pursue institutional objectives.

The growing adoption of project-based structures reflects broader institutional pressures affecting the third sector (Desjardins et al., 2026). Increasing accountability requirements, competition for external funding, demands for measurable social impact, and greater expectations regarding organizational transparency have encouraged nonprofit organizations to adopt more formalized management practices (Wagner, Huemann, & Radujkovic, 2021; Liñares-Zegarra & Wilson, 2024). In this sense, projectification should not be understood merely as the diffusion of project management techniques but as an organizational response to changing institutional environments that require greater managerial capacity and strategic coordination.

Recent studies demonstrate that projectification has substantially reshaped the governance of nonprofit organizations (Desjardins et al., 2026). Löfström (2025) argues that project logic has become the predominant mechanism through which NGOs coordinate activities with governments, funding agencies, and private organizations. Likewise, Pachura (2025) suggests that projects increasingly function as strategic assets that support organizational sustainability, entrepreneurial initiatives, and institutional resilience rather than simply serving as vehicles for implementing isolated interventions. Similar evidence has been reported in educational and community-based organizations, where projectification has transformed planning processes, organizational learning, and collaborative practices (Heimo, Pastuhov, & Salo, 2025).

However, projectification also introduces important organizational tensions. The increasing reliance on projects frequently promotes greater formalization, standardized reporting, and

performance measurement while simultaneously reinforcing short-term planning cycles associated with funding opportunities (Małecka-Dobrogowska, 2025). As a consequence, organizations may experience tensions between maintaining their institutional mission and adapting their priorities to satisfy donor expectations. This managerial paradox illustrates that projectification is not an inherently positive process but rather a negotiated organizational transformation involving trade-offs between accountability, flexibility, organizational autonomy, and community responsiveness (Cellerino, Mancini, Ahola, 2026).

Despite these tensions, the literature consistently recognizes the potential of projectification to strengthen organizational capacity when supported by appropriate governance arrangements and management practices. Project-based structures facilitate stakeholder coordination, improve resource mobilization, increase organizational learning, and create conditions for scaling social innovation initiatives (Pflitsch et al., 2024). Furthermore, projectification contributes to the institutionalization of planning, monitoring, and evaluation practices, thereby improving transparency and organizational legitimacy (Bouzarovski, 2025).

The successful implementation of projectification, however, depends on organizations' ability to integrate project logic into their existing structures without undermining their social mission or volunteer-based culture. Studies adopting PMBOK inspired approaches indicate that formal management practices enhance organizational maturity, reduce improvisation, and improve execution capacity when appropriately adapted to the characteristics of nonprofit organizations (Angulo et al., 2024; Desjardins et al., 2026). Accordingly, projectification should be viewed not as the replacement of traditional organizational values by managerial techniques but as a process of organizational adaptation through which project-based practices are selectively incorporated to strengthen institutional effectiveness.

Although literature has significantly advanced the understanding of projectification as an organizational phenomenon, most studies emphasize institutional drivers, governance transformations, or accountability mechanisms. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding how projectification is operationalized within small volunteer-based organizations, where managerial practices coexist with informal coordination, relational governance, and resource limitations. This observation suggests that explaining projectification requires moving beyond institutional analysis to examine the organizational competencies that enable project logic to become embedded in everyday practices. The following section therefore examines competency development as a critical mechanism linking projectification to organizational effectiveness in third-sector organizations.

Competencies for projectification in social projects

The increasing adoption of project-based organizational structures requires third-sector organizations to develop competencies that extend beyond traditional project management

capabilities. As projectification becomes embedded in organizational routines, governance arrangements, and decision-making processes, competencies evolve from individual attributes into organizational capabilities that enable the effective implementation of project logic (Lundin, 2016). Consequently, projectification and competency development should be understood as mutually reinforcing processes rather than independent organizational phenomena.

The literature consistently recognizes technical competencies as the foundation for improving the effectiveness and reliability of social projects. Planning, budgeting, scheduling, monitoring, risk management, and impact evaluation provide the managerial infrastructure necessary to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability (Solntsev, 2023). Likewise, Angulo et al. (2024) demonstrate that the adoption of management practices inspired by the PMBOK contributes to reducing uncertainty, improving organizational discipline, and strengthening execution capacity, even within relatively small nonprofit organizations.

However, the management of social projects extends far beyond technical execution. Unlike projects developed in commercial settings, social initiatives depend heavily on the quality of relationships established among organizations, beneficiaries, volunteers, funding agencies, and local communities (Wagner, Huemann, & Radujkovic, 2021; Liñares-Zegarra & Wilson, 2024). Consequently, relational competencies become equally important for project success. Nunes and Zurlo (2023) argue that social innovation emerges from collaborative processes capable of facilitating dialogue, participation, and the co-creation of solutions among multiple stakeholders. Similarly, Piłat (2024) highlights empathy, active listening, and collaborative problem-solving as essential competencies for understanding community needs and developing socially meaningful interventions.

Recent studies suggest that projectification requires organizations to strengthen entrepreneurial and leadership competencies (Rosamilha, Silva, & Penha, 2024). Rather than merely coordinating activities, project leaders increasingly act as brokers who mobilize networks, secure resources, negotiate partnerships, and identify opportunities within uncertain institutional environments. Van Lunenburg (2025) demonstrates that these entrepreneurial capabilities significantly influence organizational resilience, innovation capacity, and long-term sustainability, particularly in projects operating under conditions of financial instability and institutional uncertainty.

Contextual competencies also play a critical role in volunteer-based organizations. Social projects are frequently implemented in environments characterized by resource scarcity, institutional fragility, and rapidly changing community demands. Under such conditions, effective project management depends on the ability to adapt managerial practices while preserving organizational legitimacy and community trust. Oyekunle and Anibaloye (2024) argue that accountability, efficient resource utilization, and methodological flexibility are essential for maintaining project continuity in vulnerable contexts. Similarly, Kaputa and Tembo (2024) demonstrate that

organizations lacking these contextual competencies experience greater difficulty sustaining long-term social initiatives and responding to changing local priorities.

Taken together, these studies indicate that competency development should not be viewed merely as an operational requirement but as a strategic capability that enables organizations to institutionalize projectification. Technical competencies support managerial formalization, as well as relational competencies facilitate stakeholder engagement and collaborative governance, and entrepreneurial competencies strengthen organizational adaptability. In the same vein, contextual competencies ensure alignment between project practices and local realities. Their interaction creates the organizational conditions necessary for transforming project-based work from isolated initiatives into institutionalized managerial practice.

Despite this growing body of knowledge, the relationship between projectification and competency development remains insufficiently explored in small nonprofit organizations. Existing studies generally examine competencies as determinants of project success or analyze projectification as a structural organizational transformation. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how these processes evolve simultaneously within volunteer-based organizations, where informal governance, community engagement, and resource constraints shape the institutionalization of project logic. Addressing this intersection provides an opportunity to advance both projectification theory and research on the management of third-sector organizations.

This limitation is particularly relevant because organizations operating under volunteer governance differ substantially from both private-sector and public-sector organizations. Their activities are strongly influenced by civic engagement, informal coordination, community relationships, and resource constraints, creating organizational contexts in which project logic cannot simply be transferred through the adoption of formal management techniques. Instead, projectification appears to evolve through gradual processes of adaptation in which managerial practices, organizational competencies, and institutional culture continuously influence one another.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach to examine social processes, participants' meanings, and situated organizational practices. Qualitative research seeks to interpret phenomena within their natural settings, emphasizing lived experience and the complexity of social interactions (Creswell, 2021). This approach is particularly appropriate for third-sector organizations, where volunteer motivations, organizational dynamics, and management practices interact in ways that cannot be adequately captured through highly structured methods.

A single-case study design was adopted because it allows an in-depth examination of complex organizational processes within their real-life context (Creswell, 2021; Yin, 2015). Case studies are particularly suitable when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined and when multiple sources of evidence are required to understand organizational change. In addition, the overall research design follows established recommendations for rigorous qualitative case study research regarding case selection, the use of multiple sources of evidence, analytical transparency, and theory development (Barratt et al., 2011; Voss et al., 2002).

Consistent with Yin's (2015) case study design principles, this study explicitly defines both its unit of analysis and its units of observation. The unit of analysis is the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa–RJ as a whole organizational entity. The units of observation comprise the individual social projects developed by the organization during the study period, including, among others, the Women's Entrepreneurship Award Project (PERMSF), No Burnings, Papa Pilha, Football School, and Electronic Waste Disposal. Examining multiple projects within the same organization enabled the identification of variations in the degree of formalization of project management practices while preserving the organization as the primary analytical unit.

Case Selection

The Rotary Club of Barra Mansa-RJ was selected because of its long-standing community engagement, sustained portfolio of social initiatives, and evident incorporation of project-based practices into its organizational activities. The case also satisfied criteria of typicality and accessibility, making it appropriate for investigating projectification in a volunteer-based third-sector organization.

First, the organization has more than thirty years of institutional history, providing a stable organizational context in which changes in managerial practices can be observed over time. Second, its diversified portfolio of social projects at different stages of formalization enables projectification to be examined as an ongoing organizational process rather than as a fully institutionalized condition. Finally, the researchers had continuous access to organizational members, meetings, and internal project documentation, allowing prolonged engagement with the field and facilitating the collection of multiple sources of evidence.

As Rodrigues, Sugahara, and Benedicto (2022) argue, research on third-sector organizations should employ methods capable of capturing both formal organizational structures and everyday practices, since the combination of volunteer governance, limited resources, and strong community relationships produces distinctive organizational arrangements. Accordingly, the case study design provides appropriate conditions for examining how projectification emerges, evolves, and becomes embedded in organizational routines.

Data Collection

Data collection combined three complementary methods: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Employing multiple sources of evidence enabled methodological triangulation, allowing the phenomenon to be examined from different perspectives while increasing the robustness and credibility of the findings (Yin, 2015). The combination of these methods also facilitated comparisons between participants' accounts, observed organizational practices, and documentary records.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four members of the Rotary Club who were directly involved in the planning, coordination, implementation, or monitoring of social projects. Participants had between two and five years of continuous involvement with the organization and represented diverse professional backgrounds, including business administration, engineering, psychology, biology, and education. This diversity provided complementary perspectives on organizational decision-making, project management practices, and project implementation.

Although the number of interviewees may appear limited, it is consistent with the logic of qualitative single-case study research, in which the organization, not the individual respondent, constitutes the primary unit of analysis (Yin, 2015). The four participants represented all active leadership and coordination roles directly involved in the PERMSF project during the study period, and no additional participants met the established selection criteria. Accordingly, the sample was considered theoretically sufficient to explain the organizational processes under investigation, particularly when complemented by participant observation and document analysis through methodological triangulation.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) active involvement in the coordination, implementation, or monitoring of the PERMSF project; (2) a minimum of two years of continuous engagement with the organization; and (3) representation of distinct functional roles within the club's governance structure. This strategy consists of recommendations for qualitative research in third-sector organizations, where participant selection should prioritize individuals capable of providing rich and complementary insights into organizational practices (Rodrigues et al., 2022).

The interview protocol was developed from the theoretical dimensions identified in the literature review, particularly projectification, social project management, competency development, and organizational change. Consistent with the understanding of interviews as dialogical interactions in which meaning is co-constructed by interviewer and participant (da Silva, Penha, & Bizzarias, 2022), the protocol adopted a semi-structured format that ensured consistency across interviews while maintaining sufficient flexibility to explore issues emerging from participants' experiences.

Interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes, were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was conducted during meetings, planning sessions, and field activities associated with the PERMSF project. The objective was to observe organizational dynamics, decision-making processes, interactions among members, and management practices as they occurred naturally, thereby capturing aspects that might not be fully articulated during interviews.

Consistent with Flick (2018), systematic field notes and analytical memos were produced during and immediately after each observation session. These records documented organizational routines, informal interactions, emerging managerial practices, and contextual factors relevant to understanding the projectification process. The observational data were subsequently integrated into the analytical corpus and triangulated with interview and documentary evidence.

Document Analysis

Document analysis included meeting minutes, internal reports, project proposals, communication materials, planning documents, and organizational records related to the club's social initiatives. These documents provided complementary evidence regarding the formalization of management practices and the evolution of project-based activities.

Document review was guided by an analytical framework comprising three dimensions: (1) project structure, (2) management practices, and (3) community engagement. Documentary evidence was examined to identify organizational patterns, inconsistencies, and contextual elements that complemented and corroborated findings obtained through interviews and participant observation (Flick, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible and rigorous method for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This analytical approach was selected because it enables systematic examination of organizational processes while remaining sensitive to contextual complexity and participants' lived experiences.

The analytical process began with repeated readings of the interview transcripts, field notes, and documentary evidence to promote familiarity with the data. Initial coding was conducted line by line across all sources of evidence, assigning descriptive labels to excerpts related to project management practices, organizational competencies, governance arrangements, and manifestations of projectification. Coding remained inductive while being informed by the

theoretical dimensions identified in the literature review, allowing empirical insights to emerge without imposing predetermined categories.

The initial codes were subsequently grouped according to semantic similarity and conceptual proximity, resulting in broader analytical categories. Through an iterative process of comparison and refinement, these categories evolved into the four themes presented in the Results section. Throughout the analysis, researchers repeatedly returned to the original material to verify interpretations, refine coding decisions, and ensure that emerging themes accurately reflected the empirical evidence.

Theme validation followed a two-stage procedure. First, the internal coherence of each theme was assessed by examining the consistency between coded excerpts and the broader conceptual interpretation. Second, external heterogeneity among themes was evaluated to ensure that each theme represented a distinct analytical dimension and avoided conceptual overlap (Christou, 2023). Themes were progressively refined until they captured clearly delimited patterns of organizational practice while preserving the richness and contextual specificity of the empirical material (Polat, 2025).

Consistent with Braun and Clarke (2022), the analysis moved beyond descriptive categorization toward interpretative explanation. As emphasized by Lochmiller (2021), thematic analysis should generate analytical insights rather than merely summarize participants' accounts. Accordingly, the final themes were interpreted in relation to the study's objective and the broader literature on projectification, project management, and competency development. Although Microsoft Word was used to organize the empirical material, all analytical decisions resulted from iterative interpretation, continuous comparison across data sources, and collective discussion among the researchers.

Research Rigor

The rigor of this study was strengthened through multiple complementary procedures designed to enhance the credibility, dependability, and transparency of the research process. Consistent with Yin (2015), construct validity was reinforced through methodological triangulation involving three independent sources of evidence, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, allowing findings to be corroborated across different forms of empirical material while reducing reliance on any single source of evidence.

The overall research design followed established recommendations for rigorous qualitative case study research concerning case selection, the use of multiple sources of evidence, analytical transparency, and theory development (Barratt et al., 2011; Voss et al., 2002). A case study protocol guided the data collection process to ensure consistency across interviews, observations,

and documentary analysis while maintaining sufficient flexibility to capture emerging organizational dynamics during fieldwork.

Dependability was supported through the systematic application of a common interview protocol, verbatim transcription of all interviews, detailed field notes, and transparent documentation of analytical decisions throughout the coding and theme development process. These procedures created a clear audit trail, enabling the analytical process to be followed and evaluated (Flick, 2018).

Credibility was further enhanced through iterative comparison among interviews, observational evidence, and documentary records during both coding and theme refinement. Rather than relying exclusively on participants' narratives, interpretations were continuously confronted with organizational documents and observed practices, increasing confidence in the consistency of the findings.

Finally, analytical transparency was strengthened through explicit documentation of coding decisions, systematic refinement of themes, and continuous verification of the coherence between empirical evidence and theoretical interpretation (Christou, 2023). Consistent with Polat (2025), particular attention was devoted to maintaining clear conceptual boundaries among themes while preserving the contextual richness of the case. Together, these procedures enhanced the trustworthiness of the study by ensuring that the findings were firmly grounded in multiple sources of empirical evidence and supported by a transparent analytical process.

All research procedures complied with ethical principles applicable to qualitative research in the social sciences. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained before data collection, including authorization for audio recording of the interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Project Context or Problem Situation

The Rotary Club of Barra Mansa-RJ is part of Rotary International, a global network comprising more than 1.2 million members with over 110 years of institutional history. Guided by the mission of promoting service, integrity, goodwill, and peace through community engagement, Rotary operates through locally developed social projects aligned with broader international priorities (Rotary International, 2023). Founded in 1994, the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa has established itself as an important local actor by coordinating social initiatives in partnership with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders.

Like many volunteer-based third-sector organizations, the club combines a consolidated institutional identity with a governance structure that relies heavily on voluntary participation and collaborative decision-making. This organizational configuration provides considerable flexibility for responding to community needs but simultaneously creates managerial challenges associated with planning, coordination, knowledge retention, and resource allocation. Such characteristics are consistent with previous studies showing that nonprofit organizations frequently operate under conditions in which organizational legitimacy and social commitment coexist with limited managerial formalization (Brzustewicz et al., 2022; Oyekunle & Anibaloye, 2024).

Although the Rotary Club develops its activities primarily through projects, project management practices have historically evolved in an informal and decentralized manner. Rather than following standardized methodologies, project planning and execution have largely depended on members' individual experience, interpersonal relationships, and accumulated organizational knowledge. Consequently, the organization represents an appropriate setting for examining projectification as an evolving organizational process rather than as a fully institutionalized managerial system. This characteristic is particularly relevant because it enables observation of how project logic gradually becomes embedded in organizational routines while interacting with an established volunteer culture.

The projects and actions of the Rotary Club Barra Mansa

The Rotary Club of Barra Mansa maintains a diversified portfolio of projects addressing education, environmental sustainability, public health, infrastructure, and social inclusion. These initiatives are aligned with Rotary International's seven areas of focus and demonstrate how global institutional priorities are translated into locally adapted interventions through partnerships with public organizations, private institutions, and community actors.

Rather than concentrating on a single thematic area, the club coordinates projects that address distinct community demands. Environmental initiatives include the No Burnings Project, which promotes wildfire prevention through educational campaigns and partnerships with environmental agencies, the Papa Pilha Project, which encourages the proper disposal of batteries, and the Rotary Tree Counter, which supports reforestation initiatives through systematic monitoring of tree planting. Educational and social inclusion initiatives include the School Garden Project and the Youth of Gold Football School, both designed to strengthen community engagement while promoting education, healthy lifestyles, and social development. Additional projects focus on public health, such as End Polio Now, and local infrastructure, including the Ponte–Arcos Proposal, which seeks to improve mobility between rural and urban communities.

The diversity of this project portfolio provides important analytical value because it illustrates different degrees of managerial complexity, stakeholder engagement, and organizational formalization within the same institutional setting. Rather than representing isolated initiatives,

these projects collectively demonstrate how the organization adapts project-based practices to heterogeneous social demands while operating under common governance arrangements.

Among these initiatives, the Women's Entrepreneurship Award Project (PERMSF) emerged as the most appropriate case for investigating projectification. Compared with the club's other projects, PERMSF exhibits the highest degree of managerial formalization, involving structured planning procedures, defined governance arrangements, partnerships with external organizations, competency-based task allocation, and systematic monitoring activities. Consequently, the project offers a unique opportunity to examine how projectification is operationalized within a volunteer-based organization and how formal management practices coexist with the relational culture that characterizes the Rotary Club.

Project: Rosângela Maia Salgado Ferreira Entrepreneur Award (PERMSF)

The Rosângela Maia Salgado Ferreira Women's Entrepreneurship Award (PERMSF) was established to encourage female entrepreneurship and recognize women-led businesses within the municipality of Barra Mansa. Beyond its symbolic dimension, the initiative seeks to stimulate local economic development by promoting entrepreneurial capabilities and strengthening networks among women entrepreneurs. The project is coordinated by a multidisciplinary working group composed of representatives from civil society organizations and local government. Institutional support from organizations such as SEBRAE, CDL, OAB, and ACIAP expands the initiative's organizational capacity and illustrates the collaborative governance arrangements that characterize contemporary third-sector projects.

From the perspective adopted in this study, PERMSF represents more than an annual award. It constitutes a strategic organizational initiative through which projectification becomes observable in practice. The project incorporates clearly defined objectives, structured governance mechanisms, stakeholder coordination, competency allocation, planning routines, monitoring procedures, and measurable outcomes. These characteristics correspond to the organizational dimensions commonly associated with projectification (Lundin, 2016; Wagner, Huemann, & Radujkovic, 2021).

More importantly, PERMSF demonstrates that projectification extends beyond the adoption of managerial tools. The initiative integrates organizational learning, institutional visibility, community engagement, and strategic positioning into a single project structure. Consequently, the project provides an empirical opportunity to examine how projectification contributes to organizational maturation while preserving the collaborative values that characterize volunteer-based organizations.

Type of Project Intervention and mechanisms adopted

Seeking to improve the management quality and social impact of its initiatives, the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa has progressively implemented an organizational intervention aimed at introducing projectification practices. Rather than representing a radical organizational change, this intervention reflects an incremental process through which project management principles have gradually become incorporated into planning, execution, evaluation, communication, and governance routines.

The clearest expression of this organizational transformation is observed in the second edition of PERMSF (August-November 2025). Compared with previous editions, the project demonstrates significant advances in the formalization of management practices. Activities that were previously coordinated primarily through informal communication and members' experience became supported by project schedules, prior budget planning, competency mapping, sponsorship contracts, structured pitch presentations, evaluation panels, and systematic interaction with institutional partners.

These developments illustrate more than the introduction of isolated project management tools. They indicate the progressive institutionalization of project logic within the organization, consistent with conceptualizations of projectification as an organizational transformation process rather than simply an increase in the number of projects (Maylor & Turkulainen, 2019; Wagner et al., 2021).

As illustrated in Figure 1, PERMSF was organized into five sequential phases, culminating in Pitch Day, during which participants formally presented their business proposals to an evaluation committee, followed by the awards ceremony.

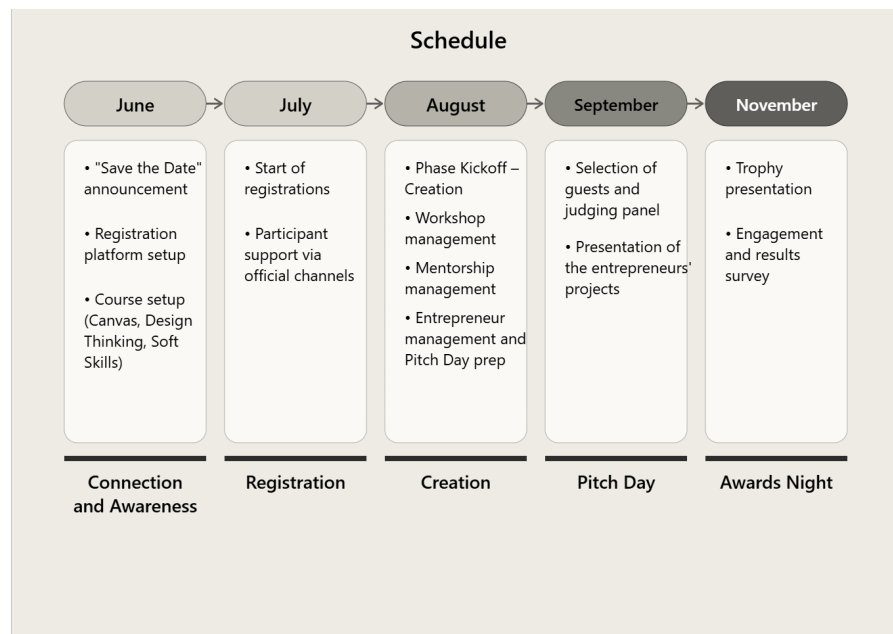


Figure 1- PERMSF Project Schedule
 Source: Prepared by the authors, 2026.

The project itself was structured around an entrepreneurial development journey integrating Business Model Canvas, Design Thinking, Financial Planning, Customer Service strategies, and soft skills development (Figure 2). Activities were delivered through a hybrid format combining face-to-face workshops, online mentoring sessions, and individualized guidance. Rather than functioning exclusively as an award competition, PERMSF became a structured learning process through which participants progressively developed entrepreneurial competencies while interacting with external mentors and institutional partners. This finding reinforces the argument that projectification involves organizational capability development in addition to managerial formalization (Lundin, 2016).

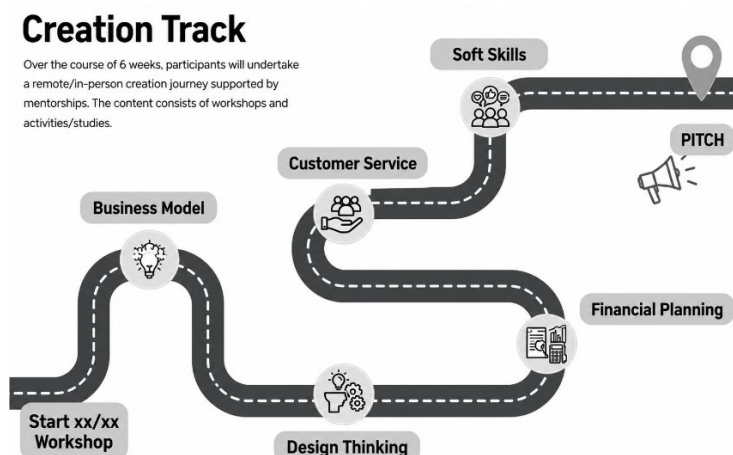


Figure 2 - PERMSF Project Execution Track (Source: Prepared by the authors, 2026).

Unlike traditional hierarchical organizational structures, the intervention adopted by the Rotary Club evolved through an incremental and hybrid governance model. Organizing committees resembling cross-functional squads were established to coordinate specific activities according to members' expertise. Once preliminary proposals were developed, decisions were collectively discussed and approved by the broader membership, preserving the participatory and volunteer-oriented governance traditionally associated with the Rotary Club.

Rather than replacing collaborative governance, projectification was adapted to the organization's existing institutional culture. Contemporary project management practices emphasizing accountability, stakeholder coordination, and value delivery (Lovett et al., 2025; Maylor & Turkulainen, 2019), were incorporated without compromising participatory decision-making. Consequently, projectification emerged as an adaptive organizational process shaped by the interaction between managerial formalization and volunteer culture.

The comparison demonstrates that organizational change extended beyond the adoption of isolated management techniques. Instead, it involved the gradual reconfiguration of governance structures, planning routines, competency allocation, and performance monitoring. This evolution provides empirical evidence that projectification in volunteer-based organizations develops incrementally through the accumulation of organizational practices rather than through abrupt structural transformation.

Beyond procedural changes, the intervention also redistributed organizational responsibilities according to members' professional competencies. Individuals with backgrounds in engineering, education, psychology, and management assumed strategic responsibilities related to mentoring, resource mobilization, stakeholder coordination, and logistical planning. Simultaneously, mechanisms for community listening were strengthened through systematic interaction with local leaders and educational institutions, enabling projects to respond more directly to emerging community needs. Initiatives such as the reactivation of the Orthopedic Equipment Bank further demonstrate the club's capacity to diversify its portfolio while adapting its actions to local priorities.

Overall, the intervention remains an ongoing organizational process characterized by heterogeneous levels of project management maturity among members. Informal relationship-based practices continue to coexist with the progressive adoption of formal project management methodologies. Rather than representing a complete managerial transformation, projectification currently functions as a process of progressive professionalization adapted to the institutional characteristics of volunteer-based organizations, where limited resources, collaborative governance, and strong community engagement require flexible and context-sensitive managerial solutions.

Finally, the organizational intervention described above establishes the empirical context within which projectification can be examined. The following sections draw on interviews, participant observation, and documentary evidence to explain how organizational members perceive these changes, how project-based practices are incorporated into everyday work, and how projectification emerges through the interaction between volunteer culture and formal management practices.

Empirical Projectification: Relational Competencies as the Foundation of Social Action

The interviews conducted with the four members of the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa reveal that projectification does not develop uniformly across the organization. Instead, it emerges through the coexistence of distinct forms of engagement, managerial rationalities, and degrees of appropriation of project management practices. Rather than representing a homogeneous organizational transformation, the findings indicate that projectification unfolds as an adaptive and socially negotiated process in which traditional volunteer values coexist with progressively formalized managerial practices. This observation reinforces previous studies arguing that projectification should be understood as an organizational transformation rather than merely the adoption of project management techniques (Lundin, 2016; Wagner, Huemann, & Radujkovic, 2021).

The empirical material also demonstrates that organizational competency varies considerably across projects. Not all initiatives have progressed at the same pace toward managerial formalization, reflecting differences in stakeholder dependence, project complexity, and exposure to external contingencies. The No Burnings project illustrates this situation. Designed to promote wildfire prevention among teachers and children in municipal schools, its implementation was postponed because of a teachers' strike in the local public education system, preventing the educational activities from being carried out as originally planned. Rather than indicating project failure, this situation highlights how volunteer-based organizations remain highly exposed to contextual conditions beyond their direct control. It also emphasizes the importance of flexible planning and adaptive monitoring mechanisms capable of accommodating unexpected environmental changes, an issue frequently discussed in studies of nonprofit project management (Oyekunle & Anibaloye, 2024).

Taken together, these findings indicate that projectification within the Rotary Club should not be interpreted as a linear transition from informal to formal management. Instead, different managerial logics coexist and evolve simultaneously, creating organizational spaces characterized by negotiation, experimentation, and gradual adaptation. Similar dynamics have been identified by Maylor and Turkulainen (2019), who argue that projectification evolves through organizations as project-based practices progressively reshape routines, governance arrangements, and decision-making processes without necessarily replacing existing institutional cultures.

Figure 3 presents the empirical mapping linking competency domains, modes of projectification, and respondents' organizational profiles. Importantly, the four modes of projectification emerged in this case, empirical, tactical, reflexive, and functional, did not originate as predefined analytical categories. Rather, they emerged inductively during thematic analysis as recurring patterns of organizational action and managerial orientation observed across interviews, participant observation, and documentary evidence. These empirically derived patterns were subsequently interpreted considering the literature on projectification, project management competencies, and organizational change, allowing the findings to be conceptually integrated with existing theoretical perspectives.

Therefore, Figure 3 therefore organizes four competency domains identified (relational/social, moderate technical, advanced technical, and entrepreneurial/pragmatic), which together with the competencies most strongly associated with each domain, the corresponding mode of projectification that emerged from the empirical analysis, and the organizational actor in whom each profile was most clearly observed. In addition, the analysis identifies an entrepreneurial capability operating as a transversal dimension across all four profiles, integrating planning, coordination, reflection, and execution in support of sustained social impact. Rather than representing fixed individual classifications, these profiles illustrate dominant patterns of managerial behavior observed during the organizational transition toward projectification. The following sections examine each of these profiles in greater detail.

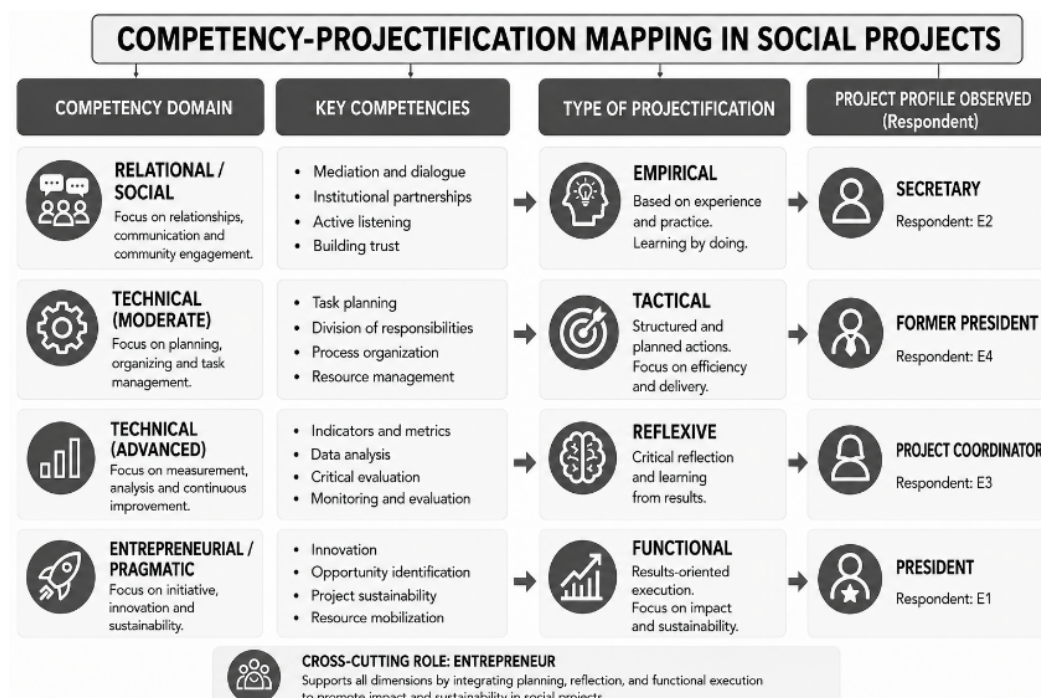


Figure 3 - Empirical Mapping of Competency Domains, Modes of Projectification, and Respondent Profiles
 Source: Prepared by the authors, 2026.

The Secretary (E2) represents a mode of action centered on relational proximity and strong affective commitment to beneficiaries. As she recalled: *"It is always very impactful when you arrive in a community, during the pandemic, and hear a mother say that she only had one mask, that the same mask her child wore to school had to be washed immediately after use because it was the only one they had"*. Rather than relying on formal planning instruments, E2's managerial practice is grounded in active listening, direct interaction with community members, and continuous interpretation of local needs. Organizational decisions emerge primarily from experience, interpersonal relationships, and moral commitment rather than from standardized project management procedures. Projects are coordinated collaboratively, with flexibility taking precedence over formal managerial control.

This pattern of action characterizes what emerged from the empirical analysis as empirical projectification. In this mode, project coordination is organized around social relationships and accumulated practical knowledge rather than around formalized governance structures. The findings suggest that managerial coordination remains embedded in community interaction, allowing projects to respond rapidly to emerging demands while simultaneously limiting opportunities for systematic planning, monitoring, and organizational learning.

This experiential and relational orientation resembles what Nunes and Zurlo (2023) describe as strategic design functioning as a boundary object within social innovation. According to these authors, sufficiently flexible organizational practices facilitate dialogue among heterogeneous actors without requiring complete technical formalization. Similarly, Piłat (2024) argues that design thinking in social organizations begins with empathy and immersion in stakeholders' lived experiences before structured methodologies are introduced. E2's emphasis on listening to community members before defining technical solutions closely reflects this logic. However, while such relational capabilities strengthen legitimacy and stakeholder engagement, the findings also indicate that they are not sufficient on their own to ensure project continuity, accountability, or long-term organizational sustainability.

In contrast, the Former President (E4) occupies an intermediate position between Rotary's traditional relational culture and the progressive adoption of procedural coordination mechanisms. Their narrative emphasizes the importance of task allocation through committees, systematic organization, and concern for institutional continuity, demonstrating how managerial routines can be incorporated without disrupting the club's collaborative identity. As she explained: *"I can definitely see the changes because there are many technical terms that we were not used to... this is already the second edition of the project, so it has been continuously improved."* (E4).

Rather than advocating a complete managerial transformation, E4 describes a gradual learning process through which new project management practices become progressively incorporated into

organizational routines. This pattern emerged from the thematic analysis as tactical projectification, a mode in which technical coordination mechanisms complement, rather than replace, the relational values that historically characterize the organization.

This finding illustrates the process through which projectification evolves within organizations, corresponding to what Maylor and Turkulainen (2019) describe as projectification occurring through organizational routines rather than simply of organizations. Likewise, Wagner et al. (2021) argue that projectification often diffuses gradually through normative pressures that progressively legitimize project-based practices even when formal governance mechanisms remain only partially institutionalized. The Rotary Club illustrates this evolutionary trajectory, in which organizational continuity is strengthened through incremental procedural improvements rather than abrupt structural change.

The Project Coordinator (E3) emerges as the principal agent driving organizational transformation. Drawing on previous experience in social innovation and entrepreneurship, she introduces a managerial repertoire characterized by structured planning, diagnostic tools, performance indicators, competency mapping, fundraising strategies, and systematic evaluation procedures. Her discourse reveals a critical awareness of the limitations associated with informal management while simultaneously recognizing the need to preserve the organization's social mission.

As she stated: *"I believe projects should begin already structured and should actually generate enough income to at least support the person coordinating the project."* (E3). Furthermore, she observed: *"They had a rudimentary organization. They kept some budget records on paper, but they had no real strategy. Nothing was planned, it was organic, things simply happened."* (E3). These statements reveal that E3 does not merely advocate the adoption of project management tools but questions the organizational conditions necessary to sustain these initiatives over time. Consequently, the thematic analysis identified this pattern as reflexive projectification, in which managerial formalization is accompanied by continuous organizational reflection regarding sustainability, governance, and long-term impact.

This interpretation is consistent with Angulo et al. (2024), who argue that the adoption of project management practices aligned with PMI principles contributes to improving organizational effectiveness in nonprofit organizations. Likewise, Van Lunenburg (2025) emphasizes that entrepreneurial competencies enable social organizations to mobilize stakeholders, diversify funding sources, and sustain organizational resilience under conditions of uncertainty. Rather than representing purely technical expertise, E3's profile illustrates how professional competencies become catalysts for broader organizational learning.

The President (E1), in turn, adopts a strongly pragmatic orientation centered on implementation and responsiveness. His managerial approach combines simple planning tools, such as

spreadsheets and schedules, with continuous monitoring through weekly meetings and collective problem solving. As E1 explained: *"We start collecting information, putting everything into Excel spreadsheets, writing documents in Word, estimating costs... and things happen almost simultaneously"*. He further noted: *"We meet every week. If a problem comes up, we discuss it during the meeting and decide together what to do."* (E1).

Unlike E3, E1 does not emphasize methodological sophistication. Instead, his management philosophy is grounded in execution, adaptability, and immediate problem solving. This organizational orientation emerged from the thematic analysis as functional projectification, characterized by the selective adoption of project management practices to ensure project delivery despite limited organizational resources and relatively low levels of managerial formalization.

This finding resembles the case reported by Oyekunle and Anibaloye (2024), who observed that small nonprofit organizations frequently rely on simplified project management practices while still achieving meaningful social outcomes. Similarly, Małecka-Dobrogowska (2025) argues that projectification often becomes institutionalized initially through individual managerial behavior before expanding to broader organizational structures. E1's pragmatic use of project management tools illustrates this incremental pattern of institutionalization.

Integrating the Four Profiles

Taken together, the four profiles demonstrate that projectification within the Rotary Club does not unfold as a linear or standardized organizational transformation. Instead, it develops through the interaction of multiple managerial rationalities shaped by members' professional trajectories, technical expertise, symbolic capital, and commitment to volunteer service. Importantly, the categories identified in this study (empirical, tactical, reflexive, and functional projectification) should not be interpreted as fixed organizational types. Rather, they constitute analytical categories that emerged inductively from the thematic analysis and were subsequently interpreted through the theoretical lens of projectification and competency development.

The temporal evolution documented in Table 1 reinforces this interpretation. The 2023 edition of PERMSF, characterized by intuitive coordination, informal budgeting, and experience-based decision making, corresponds predominantly to the empirical and relational logic represented by E2. By contrast, the 2025 edition reveals increasing managerial formalization through structured schedules, sponsorship agreements, competency-based task allocation, and performance indicators, reflecting the growing influence of the reflexive and tactical practices introduced by E3 and institutionalized by E4. At the same time, the day-to-day execution of project activities continues to rely heavily on the pragmatic coordination represented by E1.

Table 1 – Evolution in the organization of projects in the Rotary of Barra Mansa-RJ

Period	Features
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2023 Edition	Intuitive organization, oral definition of activities, little documentation and budget defined after the events.
2025 Edition	Planning with schedule, formalized sponsorship, structured pedagogical model, evaluation by board, indicators and contracts.

Source: Prepared by the authors, 2026.

Rather than replacing one organizational model with another, these findings indicate that projectification evolves through the gradual layering of formal managerial practices upon an already well-established relational culture. Accountability mechanisms, competency allocation, planning routines, and resource management become progressively more explicit while volunteer engagement, collective decision making, and community commitment remain central organizational values. This hybrid configuration reinforces recent arguments that projectification in third-sector organizations should be understood as an adaptive and context-dependent organizational transformation rather than the straightforward diffusion of standardized project management methodologies (Maylor & Turkulainen, 2019; Wagner et al., 2021).

The SWOT analysis presented in Figure 5 provides an integrated synthesis of the organizational conditions shaping the projectification trajectory within the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa. Rather than merely identifying managerial strengths and weaknesses, the analysis reveals how internal capabilities and external pressures jointly influence the institutionalization of project-based practices within a volunteer-driven organization.

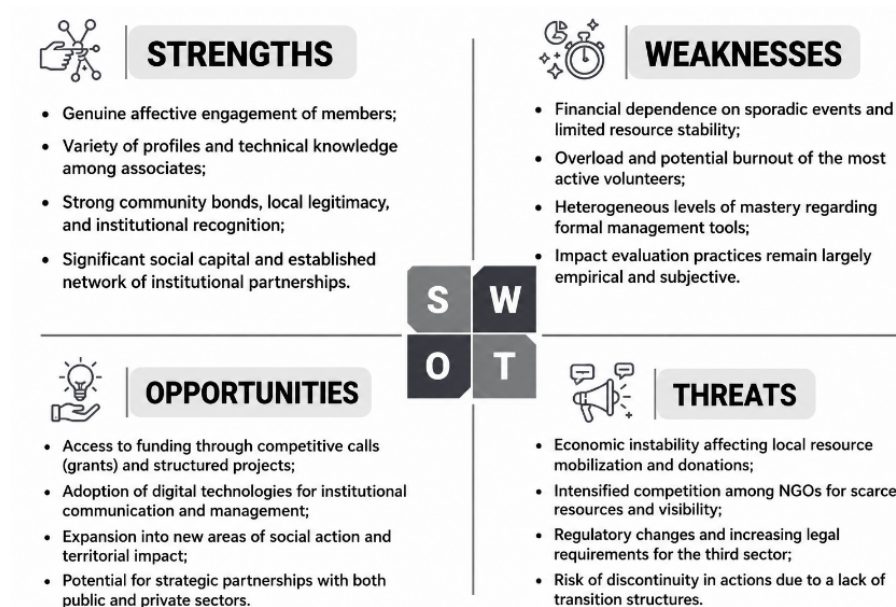


Figure 4 – SWOT analysis of the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa (Source: Prepared by the authors, 2026).

The club's principal strengths, its strong local reputation and legitimacy, extensive volunteer mobilization capacity, and well-established partnership network, constitute important forms of

social and relational capital that support stakeholder coordination and collective action. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that collaborative networks and community legitimacy are fundamental enablers of project-based governance in third-sector organizations (Löfström, 2025; Pflitsch et al., 2024). In the Rotary Club, these resources provide the institutional foundation upon which projectification can progressively develop.

On the other hand, the weaknesses identified, including limited engagement of new members, financial dependence on sporadic fundraising events, and internal bureaucratic constraints, reflect structural vulnerabilities commonly reported in volunteer-based organizations undergoing projectification (Wagner, Huemann, & Radujkovic, 2021; Brzustewicz et al., 2022). These limitations reduce organizational maturity by constraining the standardization of managerial routines, limiting systematic competency development, and restricting the organization's capacity to produce consistent evidence of social impact, an increasingly important requirement for accountability and external funding (Oyekunle & Anibaloye, 2024).

The opportunities identified, expansion into new areas of intervention, greater access to competitive funding through structured projects, and the adoption of digital technologies for communication and project management, suggest that projectification may function as a mechanism for strengthening organizational resilience and long-term sustainability. These findings reinforce previous evidence indicating that the combination of structured project management practices and competency development enhances organizational learning, execution capacity, and institutional adaptability (Angulo et al., 2024; Małecka-Dobrogowska, 2025).

At the same time, external threats, including economic instability, increasing competition among nonprofit organizations, and changes in the regulatory environment, highlight the need for adaptive governance and strategic organizational positioning (Pachura, 2025). Rather than representing isolated external risks, these conditions reinforce the importance of continuously balancing managerial formalization with organizational flexibility, a tension that emerged consistently throughout the empirical analysis.

The SWOT analysis corroborates the central finding of this study, which is that projectification within the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa should be understood as a gradual and negotiated organizational transformation rather than the straightforward adoption of project management techniques. The organization currently operates through a hybrid configuration in which relational governance, volunteer engagement, and community commitment coexist with progressively formalized managerial practices. This coexistence explains why projectification remains unevenly institutionalized across projects while simultaneously demonstrating clear signs of organizational maturation.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined how projectification contributes to strengthening the management and social impact of initiatives developed by third-sector organizations through an in-depth case study of the Rotary Club of Barra Mansa-RJ. The findings demonstrate that projectification in volunteer-based organizations does not evolve as a linear process of managerial adoption. Instead, it emerges as a negotiated and context-dependent organizational transformation shaped by institutional pressures, relational culture, organizational competencies, and resource constraints. Within this setting, project management practices coexist with traditional forms of volunteer engagement, producing hybrid governance arrangements characterized by heterogeneous levels of formalization and managerial maturity.

Empirically, this study shows that the progressive incorporation of project management practices, particularly through the PERMSF initiative, has strengthened planning, stakeholder coordination, accountability, monitoring, and strategic resource allocation. However, these improvements are uneven across projects and remain strongly influenced by members' professional backgrounds, accumulated organizational experience, and the historical development of the organization. Rather than replacing the collaborative values traditionally associated with volunteer organizations, projectification gradually reshapes them by combining relational commitment with increasingly structured managerial routines.

From a theoretical perspective, this study advances a contextual refinement of projectification theory by demonstrating that, in volunteer-based organizations, projectification is better understood as a hybrid organizational adaptation than as a standardized process of managerial institutionalization. The empirical analysis identified four emergent modes of projectification (empirical, tactical, reflexive, and functional), which represent analytically distinct patterns through which project-based practices become embedded in organizational routines. Rather than constituting a universal typology, these modes illustrate how different managerial rationalities coexist during organizational transformation. By integrating the literature on projectification, social project management, and competency development, the study extends current knowledge by showing that projectification evolves through the interaction between formal management practices, volunteer culture, organizational learning, and contextual constraints.

The findings also highlight structural conditions that influence the consolidation of project-based governance. Volunteer overload, uneven distribution of managerial competencies, informal impact assessment, and financial instability continue to constrain organizational maturation. These results suggest that sustainable projectification depends less on the isolated adoption of project management tools than on the development of integrated organizational competencies, adaptive governance arrangements, and management practices that remain aligned with the social mission of volunteer organizations.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that third-sector organizations should adopt projectification through gradual and context-sensitive implementation strategies. Formal project management practices are more likely to generate sustainable organizational improvements when integrated with collaborative governance, continuous competency development, structured stakeholder engagement, and the relational values that characterize volunteer-based organizations. Hybrid governance arrangements that combine volunteer participation with qualified coordination and systematic training appear particularly promising for strengthening organizational capacity while preserving civic engagement.

This study has several limitations. First, it is based on a single-case study, which limits analytical rather than statistical generalization. Second, the organizational transformation examined remains ongoing, meaning that the long-term effects of projectification cannot yet be fully assessed. Third, documentary triangulation concentrated primarily on the PERMSF project as the organization's most advanced example of projectification. Although the data collection identified qualitative evidence from other initiatives, including the postponement of the No Burnings project due to external contextual factors, the temporal scope of the research did not permit systematic documentary comparison across projects presenting different levels of formalization and performance. Future studies could address this limitation by conducting comparative analyses of multiple projects within the same organization and by examining how different trajectories of projectification influence organizational learning, project success, and long-term sustainability. Comparative and longitudinal studies involving different types of volunteer-based organizations would further contribute to understanding how projectification evolves across institutional contexts and how competency development supports organizational resilience over time.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that projectification should not be understood merely as the diffusion of project management techniques into third-sector organizations. Rather, it represents a strategic and cultural process of organizational reconfiguration through which volunteer-based organizations progressively reconcile managerial rationality with civic identity. The Rotary Club of Barra Mansa illustrates that projectification can strengthen governance, accountability, and organizational effectiveness without undermining the relational and community-oriented values that define volunteer action. In doing so, the study contributes to a more contextualized understanding of projectification and offers evidence that organizational maturity in the third sector is built through the gradual integration of competencies, governance practices, and institutional learning.

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