

ABSTRACT

TRAJECTORIES AND MEMORIES – WASTE & CITIZENSHIP FORUMS: UNIQUE EXPERIMENTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

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The main theme of this thesis is the Waste & Citizenship Forums (a multi-stakeholder forum) with the main objective of understanding whether its existence is really making a difference on the improvement of standards in solid waste management (SWM) – in its environmental and social aspects. In doing so it seeks to deepen the understanding of the rules that structure participation at the forums; assess the progress towards eradication of open dumps and social inclusion and assess what role the forums have played in it (if any); to assess potential and constraints in the forum's ability to influence public policies regarding solid waste and to assess how inclusive the Forums are in terms of social inclusion of non-organized waste pickers and other informal sector workers within SWM. The thesis articulates two main theoretical frameworks: (1) Nancy Fraser's (2007) discussion within the paradigm of redistribution-recognition-representation, in order to interpret the Waste & Citizenship Forum under the theme of social justice, and (2) Fung & Wright's (2001) discussion on Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) experiments in order to investigate the effectiveness of this Forum in terms of problem solving in SWM and in producing fair and equitable outcomes for waste pickers. It is based on multiple-case descriptive studies incorporating three analytical levels: the national arrangement (the National Waste & Citizenship Forum); a state arrangement (the Waste & Citizenship Forum of Minas Gerais State) and a municipal level (Belo Horizonte). The methodology applied is qualitative (with the use of semi-structured interviews; direct observation; document analysis; exam/analysis of official data bank on waste picking activities). It was found that the Waste & Citizenship Forum helped to give more visibility to the social and environmental importance of the work carried out by the waste pickers and brought, also, the existing cooperatives and associations into the spotlight. Some of the challenges identified refer to the need of creating a framework of social and environmental indicators to assess public policies in solid waste management, the inclusion of other groups of informal workers within the SWM and to resume the campaign for eradication of child labour at open dumps.

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Expanded Summary

Introduction

The literature about the informal sector shows that conventional approaches in solid waste management (SWM) usually lead to centralized and bureaucratic solutions that ignore the potential contributions of the informal recycling sector. Local governments seldom engage in partnerships with this sector in most developing countries.

This scenario differs from what has been happening in Brazil where, over the last 2 decades, there has been great recognition about the importance of the work developed by the waste pickers (called *catadores de material reciclável*, i.e. *collectors of recyclables*) and support for their organizations.

There has been an increase in the number of *catadores* organized into cooperatives and/or associations and also in the support these organizations have received from different levels of government¹. There is a strong network of multiple stakeholders linked together with the purpose of strengthening these informal recycling workers as economical actors in SWM. This has resulted in the formation of partnerships of many membership based organizations (MBO) with local governments in municipal recycling schemes. There has been, also, a strong commitment from the national government towards the elaboration of public policies geared to this sector, indicating that *catadores'* organizations have managed to achieve a semi-public status² in Brazil.

This has been happening due to the process of social mobilization of waste pickers (with the strong support of NGOs) dating back to the late 1980's but also due to the whole process of re-democratization of local governments since the 1990's with municipalities taking a leadership role on the responsibilities of the State as a catalyst of social development. One important contribution in catalysing these changes was that of the Waste & Citizenship Forums – the subject of the thesis *Trajectories and Memories – Waste & Citizenship Forums: Unique Experiments of Social Justice and Participatory Governance*.

In 1998, under the leadership of the UNICEF, a National Waste & Citizenship Forum (FNLC) was launched with the following objectives: eradication of child and adolescent labour at open dumps; eradication of open dumps, recovery of degraded areas and implementation of sanitary landfills; and, promotion of partnerships between local governments and *catadores'* MBOs in recycling programmes.

¹There has also been a breakthrough in the involvement of the private sector in partnerships with *catadores'* organizations under the concept of social corporate responsibility.

²Referring to the institutional forms and practices made available by the political system to groups of interest that confers a particular status to their basis of operation as discussed in the work of Klaus Offe.

Waste & Citizenship Forums are participatory arrangements where public matters in SWM can be talked over and argued about. It convenes different organizations from civil society and from the public and private sectors to discuss how waste management can be associated with the right of informal waste pickers to earn their living through the collection and processing of wastes, as well as the betterment of their working conditions. The country's dimension, its regional, cultural and physical peculiarities required the creation of National, State, and Municipal Forums where diverse government and non-governmental sectors coordinate their actions.

This thesis is based on multiple-case studies incorporating three analytical levels - the national arrangement (National Waste & Citizenship Forum- FNLC); a state arrangement (Waste & Citizenship Forum of Minas Gerais State- FELC MG) and a municipal level (Belo Horizonte Municipal Waste & Citizenship Forum – FMLC BH).

Its main purpose was to carry out the first comprehensive evaluation ever on the existing Waste & Citizenship Forums to understand whether their existence is really making a difference on the improvement of standards in solid waste management – in its environmental and social aspects. In so doing the thesis contributes towards:

- ✓ Deepening the understanding of the rules that structure participation at each of the three selected forums;
- ✓ Assessing the progress towards eradication of open dumps and social inclusion and to find out what role has each specific forum played in it (if any);
- ✓ Assessing potential and constraints in the forum's ability to influence public policies in solid wastes;
- ✓ Assessing how effective waste pickers are in voicing their demands within these participatory channels;
- ✓ Assessing how inclusive the Forums are towards social inclusion of non-organized *catadores* and other informal sector workers within the SWM;
- ✓ A general evaluation of public policies in the sector in Brazil during the last few decades.

The methodology applied was qualitative: multiple case studies; semi-structured interviews; direct observation; document analysis; exam/analysis of official data bank on waste picking activities.

The thesis is structured in four main chapters:

Chapter One³ - This chapter reviews the literature on participatory governance and social justice with a focus on two main theoretical frameworks: Archon Fung's and Nancy

³ Entitled in Portuguese: "Sob que condições pode a plataforma Lixo e Cidadania redistribuir, reconhecer, representar? As experiências dos Fóruns Lixo e Cidadania como experimentos de governança participativa na Gestão de resíduos sólidos no Brasil".

Fraser's. The literature on solid waste management, waste pickers, participation and citizenship is examined: It reviews the main body of literature on waste picking for Brazil, in particular, and other contexts in general. Special focus is given in finding out how "participation" appears in the literature within solid waste field.

Chapter Two⁴ - Gives an overview of waste pickers' integration issues in India in an attempt to draw some tentative comparisons between this country and Brazil.

Chapter Three⁵ - In this chapter the methodological approach is dealt with. Three descriptive case studies are presented: national, state, and municipal Forums.

Chapter Four⁶ - The three case studies are analyzed under four main categories – redistribution, recognition, representation, and governance. An assessment of achievements, dilemmas and challenges is given. Trends are identified.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the role of the Waste & Citizenship Forum in the elaboration and implementation of public policies in SWM geared to addressing both environmental⁷ and social⁸ goals, the thesis articulates two main theoretical frameworks: (1) Nancy Fraser's (2007⁹) discussion within the paradigm of redistribution-recognition-representation, in order to question the Waste & Citizenship platform under the theme of social justice, and (2) Fung & Wright's (2001¹⁰) discussion on Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) experiments in order to investigate the effectiveness of this Forum in terms of problem solving in SWM and in producing fair and equitable outcomes for informal waste pickers. Below both frameworks are briefly sketched as to highlight some of their contributions to the analytical discussion of this thesis.

Fraser has argued that a theory of justice in a globalizing world must be three-dimensional. This means, in her view, the incorporation of the political dimension of representation, as well as the economic dimension of distribution and the cultural

⁴ Entitled in Portuguese: "Processos de integração de catadores na Índia: um parâmetro possível de comparabilidade com o Brasil?".

⁵ Entitled in Portuguese: "'Restos de Vida no Chão': Fóruns Lixo e Cidadania – Subvertendo a Gestão de Resíduos Sólidos".

⁶ Entitled in Portuguese: "Fóruns Lixo e Cidadania – Remédios Afirmativos ou Transformativos?".

⁷ Eradication of open dumps and opening of sanitary landfills.

⁸ Social inclusion of *catadores* as main economical actors in municipal recycling programmes and child labour eradication.

⁹ FRASER, N. (2007). Identity, Exclusion, and Critique – A Response to Four Critics. *European Journal of Political Theory*, Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd. / London, New Delhi and Singapore, v. 6, n. 3, p. 305-338.

¹⁰ FUNG, A. & WRIGHT, E.O. (2001). Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance. In: *Politics & Society*, Vol.29 No 1, March 2001, 5-41.

dimension of recognition¹¹. She argues for the need to think integratively as there is an interpenetration of political, economic and cultural injustices, which requires social arrangements that can address, simultaneously, claims for political representation, for redistribution and cultural identity.

Fraser argues for a shift from mono-logical theories of social justice to dialogical theories. A central element in her theory is the notion of “parity of participation”, that is the norm of justice that requires social arrangements that allow all members of society to interact with one another as peers:

“...the principle of participatory parity is an outcome notion, which specifies a substantive principle of justice by which we may evaluate social arrangements: the latter are just if and only if they permit all the relevant social actors to participate as peers in social life. On the other hand, participatory parity is also a process notion, which specifies a procedural standard by which we may evaluate the democratic legitimacy of norms: the latter are legitimate if and only if they can command the assent of all concerned in fair and open processes of deliberation, in which all can participate as peers” (2005:59).

Following Fraser’s line of argument, this thesis reinterprets the Waste & Citizenship Forum as a political action at the same time affirmative, deconstructive and transformative in solid waste management in Brazil.

Fung & Wright’s work explores innovative real-world experiments¹² that engage ordinary people in the solution of the problems affecting them. They postulate that these experiments might yield advances in three especially important democratic values: effectiveness of state action, equity, and involve, high quality citizenship (2001:25-27). The authors draw an agenda for empirical investigation into empowered participation that includes three sets of questions concerned with the (1) relationship of examined cases to the model of EPG they have designed¹³; (2) the exam of criticisms of the model, and (3) the ability of EPG to be generalized. Since the approach of EPG deals with the institutional design of participatory arrangements focused on solving tangible problems of ordinary citizens this framework was relevant for the evaluation of the ability of the Waste & Citizenship Forum to bring effective solutions to SWM.

¹¹ This means that her framework encompasses a distributive dimension (geared to class inequalities), a recognition dimension (focus on status hierarchies) and a political dimension - representation-which “furnishes the stage on which struggles over distribution and recognition are played out” (2007:313).

¹²Such as the Participatory Budgeting of Porto Alegre (Brazil) or the Neighborhood Governance Councils in Chicago, amongst others.

¹³Some of the questions are: how genuinely deliberative are the decision-making processes? How effectively are the decisions translated into actions and to what extent are the deliberative bodies able to effectively monitor implementation of decisions?

Following this main analytical framework the three selected Forums (and the policies drawn under their platform) were analyzed under four main variables:

- ✓ *Recognition*: defined as its ability to contribute to the re-signification of social imaginary about the waste pickers (from beggars to environmental agents?);
- ✓ *Redistribution*: defined by its ability to influence the elaboration of public policies designed to overcome social and economic exclusion of waste pickers;
- ✓ *Representation*: defined as the (potential) role taken by the Forums as a space for presentation and representation of demands from socially excluded groups;
- ✓ *Governance*: defined as the capacity of the Forums in linking participation to state action in order to bring effective contributions to changing the scenario of social and environmental degradation in SWM.

The Case Studies at a Glance

Case Study 1 – National Waste & Citizenship Forum

The platform designed by the National Waste & Citizenship Forum has completed, in 2008, its 10th year of existence. Since its creation at the federal level of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Social Inclusion in 2005 (which adopted the platform designed by the National Forum) the National Waste & Citizenship Forum has stopped holding regular meetings. Nevertheless, *many State and Municipal Forums are still active throughout the country*. This descriptive case is drawn from document analysis, interviews and participant observation notes from the author's direct involvement as an activist in the field.

An account of the key factors, unexpected events and circumstances that lead to an increased involvement of the informal sector in SWM in Brazil is given in this case with a brief chronological description of the development of the Informal Sector in SWM in Brazil. The main legal framework on social inclusion is reviewed as well as the main national public policies focused on this sector. The genesis of the Forum, main protagonists, its main features and the participation dynamics inside the forum are described and an assessment of main achievements and challenges is also provided.

Case Study 2 – Waste & Citizenship Forum of Minas Gerais State

The platform designed by the National Waste & Citizenship Forum was designed to function as a network with state and municipal forums working in a complimentary way. The Forum for the state of Minas Gerais (south-east of the country whose capital city is Belo Horizonte) was created in 2000 under the leadership of the State Secretariat for the Environment, the NGO Pastoral de Rua, the waste picker association ASMARE and CETEC - a state technological research centre. This Forum comprises 15 organizations from civil society, private and public universities, and state government entities. This descriptive

case is drawn from document analysis, interviews and direct observation of the forum's meetings for over 8 months.

This chapter includes: an assessment of the level of organizations of waste pickers in the Minas Gerais State and on final disposal indicators for solid wastes prior to the Forum's creation; an account of the process that led to its creation (and its main phases); an assessment of its impacts both on environmental upgrading of final disposal of residues and on social inclusion is given. Main challenges are also mapped out drawing from interviews carried out with main protagonists.

Case Study 3 – Municipal Waste & Citizenship Forum of Belo Horizonte

ASMARE the Waste Pickers' Association of Belo Horizonte City, was created in 1990, by people who had been involved in waste picking for decades - most of them with a background of living in the streets. In 1993 this association managed to get the support of the municipality and became integrated as a partner in the local recycling scheme. As ASMARE achieved publicity and the possibilities within the solid waste management field for social inclusion came to the spotlight recycling came to be seen as an escape from starvation for many people when unemployment figures in the country rose in the late 1990's. New people entered the trade with different backgrounds with many coming from formal employment experiences. *From 1999 onwards other groups of people working with recyclables were formed in the city.*

Since 2003 they have all convened at the Belo Horizonte Waste & Citizenship Forum, which has been an important space to discuss guidelines for integration of all these newly formed organizations disputing scarce public financial resources with the oldest organization ASMARE. The relationship of these new groups with ASMARE has been marked by a mixture of cooperation and dispute. There are to date many studies on ASMARE but none on the impacts of this forum in expanding the scope of social inclusion in the municipal scheme.

In this case study - based on direct observation, interviews and document analysis - the genesis of this Forum is described and its role in expanding the municipality's pro-poor policy by integrating these new groups of waste pickers. This case gives:

- ✓ An overview of the newly formed cooperatives of waste pickers;
- ✓ A detailed account on the level of support provided by local government to the cooperatives;
- ✓ Elements to identify the role of participation in social inclusion in the municipal recycling scheme and expands upon the main dynamics of the municipal forum;
- ✓ An assessment of the Forum's main achievements and challenges.

Final Remarks:

This thesis provides detailed evidence that the National Waste & Citizenship Forum and also State and Municipal Forums studied helped to give more visibility to the social and environmental importance of the work carried out by waste pickers and brought, also, the existing cooperatives and associations into the spotlight. This visibility had an impact nationwide as it inspired other groups of waste pickers to get organized, creating the basis for social activism that later led to the creation of the National Movement of Waste Pickers (MNCR) in 2001. Therefore, the Forums contributed to an increased *recognition* of Brazilian *catadores* and catalyzed the process of their organization that later led to the creation of the MNCR, therefore contributing to an increased *representation* of their interests.

Many of the achievements in SWM in general and in the integration of informal waste pickers in particular, in the last few decades in Brazil have been attributed to the existence of this new approach inaugurated by the Waste & Citizenship Forum. More funds were made available to the sector (for upgrading of disposal sites; infrastructure for recycling; opening of credit lines to MBOs etc). Many social programmes were created targeted at the *catadores*, thus contributing to an important dimension of social justice – *redistribution*. Data from official data banks and also non-profit organizations indicates improvements in waste disposal and an increase of recycling projects, thus in *governance*.

Despite all advancements over these last decades there is still much to do in terms of addressing the environmental and social challenges in SWM in the country; awareness of the importance of solid waste issues still needs to be increased amongst decision-makers and the population in general. Some of the challenges discussed in this thesis are amongst others: outcomes in terms of the numbers of recyclables collected by most municipal recycling schemes partnered with waste pickers' coops is still very low; the number of waste pickers involved in these organizations is smaller than the number of non-organized (autonomous) waste pickers working for the middlemen; cooperatives' management skills need to be improved; need for better monitoring on the implementation of SWM projects and policies.

The Waste & Citizenship platform brought about changes towards more effective management of solid wastes and on the empowerment of the informal recycling sector. It was found that the Waste & Citizenship platform was an innovative institutional arrangement that contributed to put the issue of the eradication of open dumps and claims for social inclusion on the national agenda in Brazil. New challenges lie ahead to further the agenda of coupling waste and citizenship.