

# **WASTE PICKER: A PROFESSIONAL OF THE 21st CENTURY**

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# A PROFESSIONAL

A person with the knowledge, abilities, skills, traditions, values and tools to **systematically provide a good or service relevant to society.**

# COMPONENTS OF THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

1. The name
2. The problem that it solves: the good or service provided
3. The space or scope of action
4. The tools
5. The method
6. The organization
7. The symbolic universe
8. The ethic universe
9. Public opinion

# 1.THE NAME

It is said that naming is a “Gods’ task.” The name positions and provides identity within diversity. The name of a profession or work seeks to synthesize a sense of the task and the problem it solves. In recent years, we know new names for new professions.

In a globalized world, the names of the profession are a significant problem.

The name must be understandable internationally and it should also inspire respect.

# NAMES

- Reciclador (Grassroots recycler)
  - Catador
  - Cartonero
  - Gancho
  - Ciruja
- Recuperadores urbanos
  - Recolectores
  - Waste pickers

## 2.THE PROBLEM IT SOLVES: THE GOOD OR SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE PROFESSION

Every profession solves or responds to a society problem by providing a good or service.

The importance and value of a profession depends on the public relevance that society attributes to the good or service provided.

# THE GOOD OR SERVICE OF RECYCLING

Income to  
overcome

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exclusion and  
unemployment

Caring for and  
sustainability of  
the urban  
environment

# CARING

When we love, we care; and when we care, we love (...) caring is the key category of the new paradigm of civilization that is struggling to emerge all over the world...

Caring serves both to prevent future damage and to repair past damage...

*Leonardo Boff*

# 3.THE SPACE OR SCOPE OF ACTION AND POWER

Every profession or work has a scope of action, a physical or institutional space. And within that space the professional or worker may legitimately deploy a set of decisions and actions that are associated and recognized to their role.

# THE SPACE OF THE WASTE PICKER

The street and  
the bag



Industrial  
Recycling  
Center

# 4.THE TOOLS

Hand-cart ----- Industrial kit:  
warehouses  
machines  
negotiation, lobby

# 5. THE METHOD

Collects

for himself



gather

process

transform

# 6. ORGANIZATION

- Not being organized is one of the biggest poverty indicators
- The first step out of poverty is organization
- Organizing allows us to become social actors because through it we can engage in stable transactions, build convergence of interests and access social protection

# WASTE PICKING AND ORGANIZATIONS

Alone	Pre-coop.	Regional
Family	-----cooperative-----	National
Unit		International Organization

# 7. SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE

- Every profession or job will develop, over time, a set of languages, signs and symbols that involve or summon certain actions or decisions.

# 7.SYMBOLS AND WASTE PICKING

Imagined

Stigmatized



Profession

recognized

by its added

value

# 8. ETHIC UNIVERSE

Fight for  
Recognition-----  
and Dignity

Influence  
on public policy,  
democracy  
and human rights

# 9. PUBLIC OPINION

- The nature and social identity of a profession is built through the set of judgments, opinions and values expressed both by actors in the profession and outside observers. It is this set of private and public opinions what defines a profession or job. When both opinions match, the profession attains a high social profile.

# WASTE PICKERS AND OPINION

Homeless

Dangerous

Useless

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A professional  
key to the  
protection  
of the planet.

# THE NEW SKILLS OF THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

- CARING
- SOLIDARITY
- COMPASSION

TRAITS ALREADY PRESENT IN THE  
WORLD OF WASTE PICKERS