
WIEGO Research Conference
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November, 2017
Main Points

• Literature on participatory democracy: a lot has been written normatively & conceptually and to some extent what it means in practice but a little about spaces in the waste area.

• This presentation provides insights into an empirical case about a social-governmental participatory forum investigating its impacts in governance of an urban system – SW and in advancing social justice.

• Normative democratic theory often assumes that institutional design of new democratic spaces is enough to produce changes.

• My research findings indicate that in addition to institutional design “champions for change” inside the state and well organized/mobilized IWs and NGOs on the outside were crucial in affecting change in SW management in Brazil.
The Context

- Late 1980’s: redemocratization of Brazil – wave of civil society activism´+ local democratic govts (Workers´Party) with transformative agenda for the state.
- Waste experts start engagement with “catadores” supporting their claims for recognition.
- 1998 - UNICEF´s pilot research projects (Northeast) – concern with child labor in open dumps = report and national meetings with experts, catadores
National Waste & Citizenship Forum


• Multi-Stakeholders Platform: sanitation sector (associations of engineers and of service providers), private sector, the federal govt, “catadores” coops, NGOs. Initial leadership: UNICEF

• Goals: eradication of open dumps, eradication of child labor at dumps and partnership with coops (model of BH and POA)

• Strategy: campaign for eradication of child labor + capacity building in SW (social/technical) for catadores and policy makers+ guidelines for partnering with coops in SW.
Culture

Organization

Capacity building

Infância no lixo
communication
Three Rs & Governance

• W&C Forums → increased visibility “catadores and highlighted the social and environmental importance of their work.

• Visibility = inspired other groups of catadores and led to the creation of their National Movement (MNCR) in 2001 - Recognition of “catadores”: national classification of occupations (2002)+official statistics/National SW Policy approved.

• Increased recognition of “catadores” catalysed the process of their organization that later led to the creation of their national movement contributed to an increased representation of their interests: Ministerial Committee for social inclusion at federal govt (2003).

• More funds available for the SW sector for upgrading of disposal sites; infrastructure for recycling; credit lines to coops were open etc. Many social programs were created for the catadores, thus contributing to an important dimension of social justice – redistribution.

• Data from the National Sanitation Survey showed improvements in waste disposal (from 80 percent to 50 by 2008) and an increase of inclusive recycling projects - concrete outcomes in governance.
Enabling Conditions

• Organized “catadores”: coops and a national movement + supporting partners (NGOs/scholars) = the W and Citizenship mobilization

• Champions of change: key allies within govt agencies - state responsiveness

• Political culture: actors´ openness for engagement

• Right institutional design: multi level forums

Concrete alternatives to address child labor linked to livelihoods protection paved the way to greater recognition of “catadores” - translated into concrete public policies
‘New Politics of Public Policy’?

- **Yes**: considerable achievements in public policies at all levels. Recognition in legal frameworks. Reverse logistics with catadores in the national SW policy.

- **No**: is still an ongoing process – involves contestation and struggles. Gains and reversals are part of the process.

- Political upheaval in Brazil: challenges to the relationships btw collective action and public institutions and the address of social justice claims.

  **Br**: still one of the most progressive inclusive SW frameworks – W&C Forums ideals lives on with active municipal fora in many cities.
Research Gaps

- The forms of representation within participatory spaces and new forms of exclusion (least vocal groups inside these spaces)
- Forms of interaction btw civil society actors and govt actors: networks/relationships activated outside participatory spaces to affect change (forum shopping)
- How these spaces have (if any) contributed to move from demands for “inclusion” to the notion of “popular recycling” in Brazil
- Political geography of the W&C – BH laboratory of social innovation
THANKS

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