

A woman wearing a yellow protective suit and a mask is working in a waste management site, surrounded by a large pile of trash. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the worker.

Waste & Citizenship Forum: ‘New Politics of Public Policy’ ?

WIEGO Research Conference

Sonia Dias

WIEGO Waste Specialist

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.
- 1988-1990: first associations /cooperatives of “catadores” in Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and São Paulo.
- Waste experts start engagement with “catadores” supporting their claims for recognition.
- Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte early 1990's: Partnership of local govts with “catadores” in municipal recycling. Waste experts in govt positions: championing change. BH and Porto Alegre – inclusive SW models
- 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

- 1998: National Waste & Citizenship Forum . Multi-levels: national/subnational/local forums
- **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

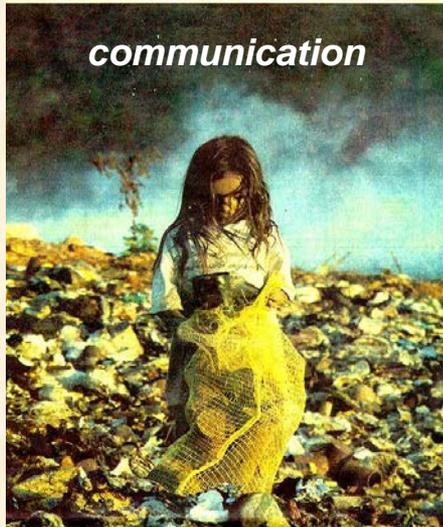


Organization



Infância no lixo

communication



Capacity building



Three Rs & Governance

- W&C Forums → 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

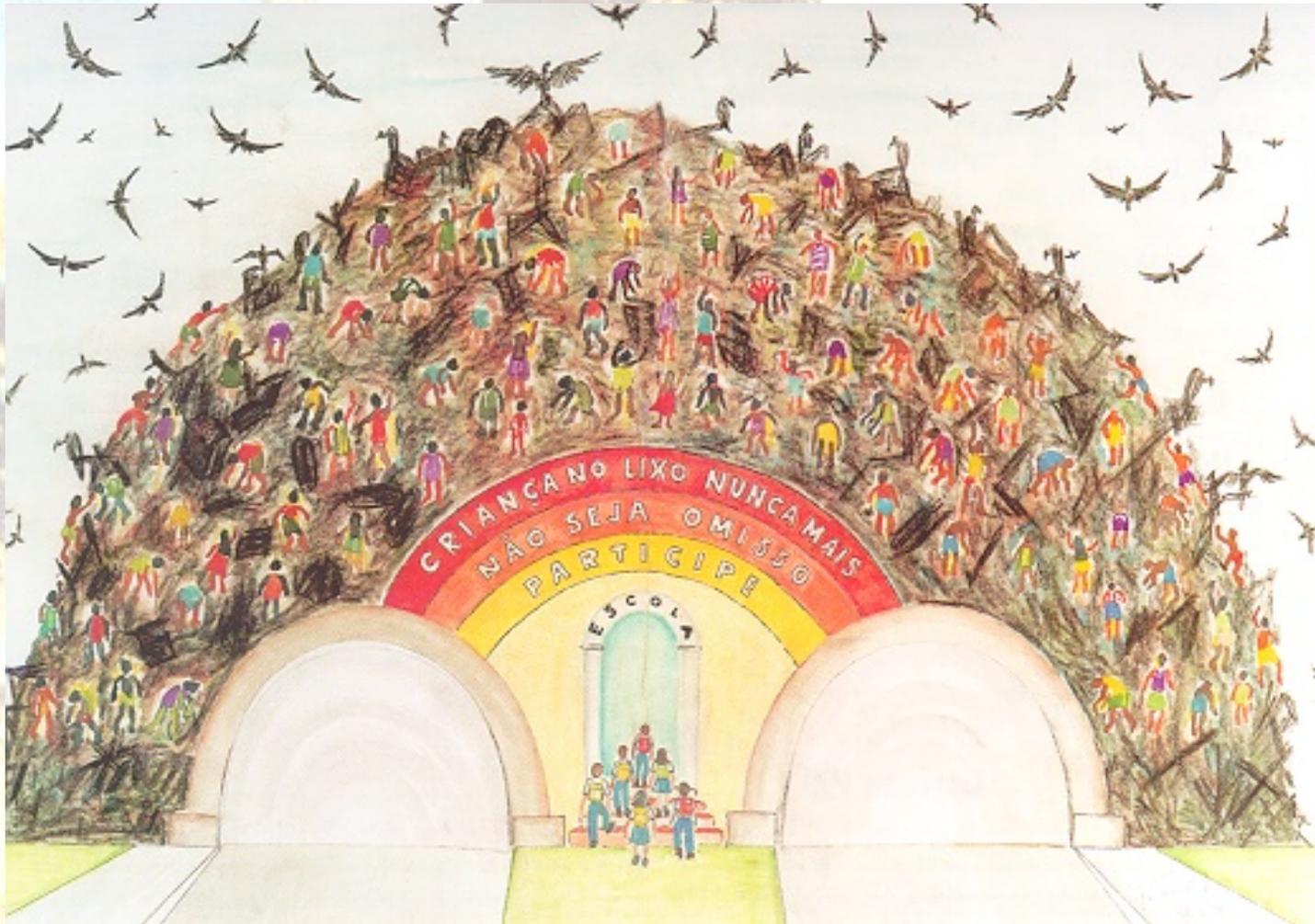
‘New Politics of Public Policy’ ?

- **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



sonia.dias@wiego.org