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Challenges for Sustainability of SSE

*The Interaction between Popular Economy, Social Movements
and Public Policies—Case Study of the Global Alliance of
Waste Pickers*

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**Challenges for Sustainability of SSE:
The Interaction between Popular Economy, Social
Movements and Public Policies –
Case Study of the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers**

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Abstract

This paper analyses the challenges for sustainability of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), focusing on the interaction between popular economy, social movements and public policies. A case study regarding the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers focuses on collective action and public policies in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, India and South Africa. It explores the complex institutional arrangements involving community groups who share solid waste management with local governments. The paper argues that the sustainability of SSE organizations is not merely a technical or economic question, but, it is essentially a political one, depending on public policies compromised with a process of social transformation at all levels, federal, state and municipal. The paper concludes that significant shifts in public policies require collective action. Public policies should promote the expansion of SSE through a change in quality in the informal popular initiatives, as well as strengthen SSE, through effectively build up capacity to meet the demands aroused from the newly shaped public policies.

Introduction: Challenges for Sustainability of SSE

The increasing urbanisation in the developing countries in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in a growing informal urban sector. In the 1980s many popular economic organizations arose, especially in the big Latin American cities. With the high levels of unemployment in the 1990s the informal economy was growing but the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) also gained a mayor emphasis. In the 2000s some countries, for example Brazil showed a decrease in the level of unemployment but the SSE continues to expand. This shows that SSE is starting to establish itself as a relevant social and economic sector and not just a residual or transitory phase during recessions of the formal economic system. SSE is a response to poverty and inequality, and has the potential to contribute to an alternative, sustainable and transformational development model. However the expansion of the SSE is full of contradictions and of challenges, which have to be faced.

This paper focuses on three aspects regarding the challenges for sustainability of SSE, respectively the interaction between SSE and popular economy; the role of collective action and coalitions between community groups, social movements and NGOs and there influence on public policies through participatory processes in deliberative spaces, such as forums and councils; and the importance of effective implementation of public policies and programs compromised with a process of social transformation at all levels, international, federal, state and municipal for the strengthening of SSE.

Approaching Popular Economy and Solidarity Economy

Since the early 1970s the concept of informal economy appears in the international development debates. The concept comprehends the experiences of the large share of economic units and workers that develop economic activities outside the formal regulatory environment. According to Martha Chen informal employment comprises one-half to three-quarters of non-agricultural employment in developing countries, respectively 48 per cent in North Africa; 51 per cent in Latin America; 65 per cent in Asia; and 72 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa. One of the main challenges is the question of whether and how to formalize the informal economy. Taking into account different meanings depending on the actors, for policymakers the main interest is the licence and taxes, the self-employed expect to receive the benefits, such as legal ownership and incentives, for the informal worker it means, basically social protection (Chen 2012). It is important to consider that the informal economy is a major provider of employment, as well as of goods and services for lower-income groups.

Milton Santos refers to two circuits, respectively the upper circuit and the lower circuit. Each circuit is defined through the set of activities developed in a certain context and by the sector of the population who participates through activity and consumption. The main difference between the activities developed in the two circuits is based on the differences in technology and organisation. The upper circuit uses capital intensive technology, whereas the lower circuit uses labour intensive technology which is often created or adapted to the local context. The economic rationality of the lower circuit and its mechanisms are based on consumption, instead of production, they address the current needs of the population, in terms of consumption and need for employment. It absorbs, continuously, the surplus-labour. Whereas profit is the motor of the

commercial activity, in the lower levels of the lower circuit the greatest concern is, above all, survival. Referring to the population, it means basically that the rich and middle classes participate in the upper circuit and the people living in poverty in the lower circuit. However the two circuits have the same origin, the same set of causes and are related to each other. Although there exist an interdependent relation, it does not mean that it is an equal relationship, the lower circuit is far more dependent on the upper circuit, than the other way around (Santos 2004).

Most of the organisations, enterprises, economic units and self-employed who compose the popular economy operate in the informal economy. However the concept of popular economy is not the same of the concept of informal economy. Besides the fact that the popular economy also comprises formalised organisations, another important aspect is that the main actors belong to the lower income classes. The concept of popular economy covers a wide range of activities, such as economic activities developed individually or at a family level, but it also includes informal groups, associations and cooperatives. The popular economy has its own economic rationality, its main purpose is not profit, but is to provide the subsistence and reproduction of life of the members and their families (Kraychete and Santana 2012). The concept of popular economy has similarities with the concept of the lower circuit of the economy; both include a wide range of activities, a huge number of persons from the lower income classes as well as a specific economic rationality which, above all, aims to provide subsistence.

From the 1990s onward there has been a growing interest and growing literature regarding the social and solidarity economy. SSE emerges as a response to overcome poverty and inequality. According to Luis Razeto solidarity economy is a theoretical formulation which captures the reality of a significant set of economic experiences – in the field of production, trade, services and financing - that share constitutive elements such as solidarity, co-operation and democratic management, defining a specific rationality, different from other economic rationalities (Razeto 1993). These initiatives are designed to address a range of specific needs, such as food security, housing, education, health and income generation. They recover the central role of labour, instead of capital, and focus on improvement of the living conditions of the members and their families (Razeto 1997). Paul Singer states that solidarity economy is a continuous process of creation by the workers in their struggle against capitalism, to change unjust and exploitative economic relations. Solidarity is the most important aspect of this economic praxis, and expresses itself, amongst others, in collective ownership of the means of production by the people who use them to produce; democratic management and distribution of net revenue and leftovers between the members (Singer 2000). José Luis Coraggio takes as a starting point that the social economy has not yet become a reality, but must be seen as a “transitory phase of economic practices of transformational actions”. The main purpose is to create a socioeconomic system organised by the principle of “expanded reproduction of life” generated form within the currently existing mixed economy (Coraggio 2007:37). The community oriented aspect of SSE, is highlighted by Amin. The solidarity economy initiatives mobilise local resources and capabilities and are based on popular mobilisation to meet local and social needs as well as human development (Amin 2009). Social and Solidarity Economy aims to satisfy human needs and is based on values such as democratic and participatory decision making and social cohesion. One of the main distinctions of SSE is associated with collective organisation, cooperation and solidarity.

From a development and justice perspective, SSE has the potential of integrated development, promoting besides local employment and economic development, also social and environmental protection, cultural diversity and empowerment. In this respect it approaches the concept of human development and the capability approach, which makes important contributions to the concept of poverty, development and social justice. According to Amartya Sen, “poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty” (Sen 2000: 87). The capability approach focuses on human life and proposes a shift of focus from the concentration on the means of subsistence towards the “actual opportunities of living”, opportunities to pursue our objectives, meaning those things that we value (Sen 2011: 233). In this sense development is fundamentally a process of empowerment. This view can be enlarged with the prospect of collective action, through community groups, social movements, forums and councils to achieve development. These spaces allow for deliberative processes. “Fostering the expansion of such means of collective action is central to the expansion of freedom” (Evans 2002: 56). The strengthening of SSE depends on the possibility to create participatory processes in deliberative spaces as forums for dialogue between social movements, civil society organisations and the government to effectively contribute to public policies which enhance the autonomy, promotes rights and are compromised with a process of social transformation.

The different concepts have several aspects which converge, the popular economy as well as the social and solidarity economy contain a huge number of informal enterprises. Estimates for the size of the popular economy are regularly based on the data regarding the informal economy. Data from the system of information on solidarity economy of Brazil show that at least one third of all solidarity economy enterprises are informal¹ (Brazil SENAES 2007). In the urban areas informality reaches two third of the organisations (Brazil SENAES 2010). However a comparison of the scale of the popular economy, based on data available on the informal economy, and data of the scale of the solidarity economy, based on data available in the system of information on solidarity economy in Brazil, show that the size of the solidarity economy corresponds to less than 1% of the popular economy. So this puts a huge challenge for SSE, how to expand SSE and what are the conditions and contexts to establish a significant change in quality in the organisations of the informal and popular economy as to converge to SSE.

A research developed in Chile among ten associations of informal micro-entrepreneurs in poor districts of Santiago shows the potential for informal popular economy initiatives to join forces and act collectively, thus establishing different forms of cooperation and solidarity and approaching SSE. Most of the associations are based on a geographical basis, others on the sector of activity. On average they have seventy-five members, most of them constitute family enterprises, and act on the household level. According to Anemaria Marín, directress of the Association of Micro-Entrepreneurs of Puente Alto: *“AMEPA not only represents the economical needs of the micro-entrepreneurs but all their human needs. The micro-enterprise is an integrated part of*

¹ These data were gathered in the period of 2005-2007 and can be found in the system of information on solidarity economy of the National Secretariat of Solidarity Economy (SENAES) of the Brazilian Ministry of Labour, respectively Sistema de Informações em Economia Solidária (SIES) at www.sies.mte.gov.br

their daily lives. The rhythm of work and the rhythm of daily life are connected” (Zeeland 1995). The associations promote different forms of cooperation, respectively economic, social and political cooperation. Regarding economic cooperation the majority of the associations develop activities such as commercialise collectively and access to credit. A few associations also jointly purchase raw materials and inputs, opening possibilities for vertical cooperation. The social cooperation aims to establish some form of social protection for their members. Several associations have introduced a solidarity fund to help associates in times of hardship, for instance, in case of illness or an accident. Others have established agreements for medical attendance with medical corporations or the local municipality. The political cooperation with municipalities aim access to education, health and habitation, as well as legalisation, tax arrangements and commercialisation, for instance opening up of markets, fairs and exhibitions and obtaining priority in local and institutional markets. Most associations were founded with support of a NGO, and get training, organisational consultancy and financial assistance, through micro-credit. The networks established by the informal popular economy initiatives and their interaction with the community and NGOs, results into political power, which strengthens the negotiations with governmental actors, to claim their economic, social and cultural rights and to influence public policies (Zeeland 2000). The experience shows that informal popular economic enterprises can develop relations based on cooperation and solidarity and thus approach SSE. However one of the constraints is that most of the associations are supported by NGOs, and therefore the scope is limited to their action radius. Leading to the question how to scale up this experience?

Examples from Brazil show that with public support it might be possible to approach a significant part of the informal popular economy to SSE. The first example is from the state of Bahia regarding a public program for social and productive inclusion and capacity building for the popular economy. According to Gabriel Kraychete and André Santana 60% of the economically active population of the Metropolitan Region of Salvador can be considered to be part of the informal popular economy², only 1% of the popular economy organisations belong to the SSE³. This huge and more or less permanent contingent expresses a matrix of inequality and poverty. In 2011 the Government of the State of Bahia started the *Programa Vida Melhor*, Programme Better Life, with the purpose to include socially and productively, through decent work, people living in poverty and with a potential for productive work. The programme aims to reach 120 thousand families in the urban areas and 280 thousand families in the rural context. The main activity focuses on technical assistance for the popular economy initiatives, comprehending the development of feasibility studies with an appropriate methodology according to the characteristics and peculiar economic logic of these enterprises. Thereafter the need for financing and microcredit can be identified, or donation in the case of extreme vulnerability. Out of the information the entrepreneur can decide whether or not to formalize and have access to social protection. It is also possible to identify and stimulate collective actions, and hence approach the SSE. Kraychete and Santana conclude that it is “insufficient to think of the sustainability of each popular economy enterprise in an isolated way.” According to them the

² Data based on the national household sample survey, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD), executed by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) in 2009, compiled and prepared by Gabriel Kraychete and André Santana, 2012.

³ Data based on the system of information on solidarity economy (SIES) of the National Secretariat of Solidarity Economy (Senaes) of the Brazilian Ministry of Labour in 2005.

sustainability of the popular and solidarity economy initiatives “supposes a process of development which promotes, together with this economy, other fundamental rights” (Kraychete and Santana 2012: 61). The public programme has a scope far beyond that of NGOs, and the possibility to reach a significant number of popular economy initiatives. However the programme is in the initial phase, so will need time to prove that it is possible to support the sustainability of the popular economy initiatives and to offer decent work to the participants, meaning to promote opportunities to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity⁴.

The second example is based on support of the federal government for programs to include informal waste pickers in solid waste management. This will be discussed below, after reflections regarding the interaction between social movements and public policies.

Interaction between Social Movements and Public Policies: Case Study of the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers

As stated in the introduction and illustrated by the example above, the sustainability of SSE is not merely a technical or economic question, but is essentially a political one, depending on public policies compromised with a process of social transformation. However to achieve significant shifts in public policies collective action is required, through coalitions between community groups, social movements, networks of NGOs, forums and councils. Below we will analyse the process of strengthening of national and regional social movements of collectors of recyclable materials, resulting in the foundation of the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers and their influence on public policies.

To contextualize some data regarding the recycling sector and organisations of waste pickers in Brazil will be presented. Recycling generates a value of almost US\$ 2 billion and avoids 10 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions. Recycling of all the materials would be worth 0.3% of GDP. Over 500 thousand people are employed in waste management and recycling, mostly as individual waste pickers in informal jobs under poor working conditions and with very low and unstable incomes. Approximately 60 thousand collectors of recyclable materials are organised in associations and cooperatives; their income is more than two times higher than that of individual waste pickers (UNEP 2011). There are at least 1,100 organisations of collectors of recyclable materials in Brazil, however about 60% are operating at the lowest levels of efficiency. The average income of the collectors is less than a minimum wage, reaching between R\$ 420.00 and R\$ 520.00, approximately US\$ 210.00 and US\$ 260.00⁵. The educational levels of the collectors are between the 5th and 8th grade of primary education (IPEA 2012). The data show that only slightly more than 10% of the waste pickers participate in collective organisations, and form part of the SSE. Although this represents a small part, it is a higher proportion in relation to other urban sectors. At the same time 90% of the waste pickers belong to the informal popular economy, which puts a tremendous challenge on the social movements and on public policies to include them in solidarity economy organisations.

⁴ The definition of decent work by the ILO can be found on www.ilo.org.

⁵ On an exchange rate of US\$ 1.00 = R\$ 2.00, on 27th of March 2013.

The first collective organisations of waste pickers were created during the second half of the 1980s and during the 1990s, with support of NGOs, especially in the big capitals as São Paulo, Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre. The first National Meeting of Collectors of Recyclable Materials was promoted in 1999. Two years later in 2001 the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Materials was founded, respectively *Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis* (MNCR). More than 1600 collectors participated in the national congress of waste pickers. Besides the founding of the MNCR, the congress resulted in the *Carta de Brasília*⁶, which presents a proposal for the recognition and regulation of the profession of collector of recyclable material. One year later in 2002 the profession was officially recognised by the federal government. This was one of the first results of the collective action of the waste pickers and demonstrated the possibility for effective influence on public policies.

The First Latin-American Congress of Collectors took place in Caxias do Sul in Brazil in 2003. About 800 collectors from Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay participated. The *Carta de Caxias*⁷ proposes the exchange between the organisations of waste pickers from Latin America. It also strengthens the claims towards the governments to guarantee selective collection primarily in partnership with the organisations of the collectors, as well as access to social programmes, as for instance literacy, and public policies promoting training and capacity building. The Second Latin-American Congress of Collectors took place in São Leopoldo, Brazil, in 2005, preceding the Fifth World Social Forum, with 1050 participants from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay. The final declaration of São Leopoldo⁸ strengthens the statements of 2003 and includes new demands, public policies of housing for the waste collectors and a law regarding the destination of recyclable materials of public institutions for associations and cooperatives of collectors of recyclable materials. In 2006 a decree was signed in Brazil attending this demand (Decree n° 5940/2006). In 2007 a Brazilian law was approved that exempt organisations of collectors of recyclable materials from the tendering-process to carry out the selective collection activities (Law n° 11.445/2007).

The First World Conference and Third Latin-American Conference of Waste Pickers were held in Bogota, Colombia, in 2008, with 700 participants from 34 countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Besides 15 Latin American Countries, there were participants, amongst others, from Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Philippines, Turkey and South Africa. The result was the Global Declaration of the First World Conference of Waste Pickers, the Declaration of the Third Regional Conference of Latin American Waste Pickers and the founding of the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers. The declaration states the commitment to work for the social and economic inclusion of the waste-pickers, strengthen their organisations to move forward in the value chain and reject incineration (WIEGO 2008). After the conference several national movements of waste pickers have been founded, for instance in Kenya and South Africa.

The experiences in different countries and continents show the importance of the participatory processes and the creation of forums for dialogue between the social

⁶ The Letter of Brasília is available in Portuguese on the website of the MNCR: www.mnccr.org.br

⁷ The Letter of Caxias is available at: www.mnccr.org.br

⁸ The Declaration of São Leopoldo is available at: www.mnccr.org.br

movements, civil society organisations and the government to contribute to public policies to strengthen and expand SSE.

In the last decade there have been “innovative institutional changes”, such as laws recognising the originality of the solidarity economy initiatives (Laville 2009: 240). Regarding the collectors of recyclable material, this has resulted in new laws and decrees, as well as innovative institutional arrangements involving community groups with the inclusion of informal waste pickers into solid waste management systems. Following some of these will be discussed.

In 1998 the National Waste and Citizenship Forum was created in Brazil with the support from UNICEF, state and municipal forums were also created. The forums are composed of civil society organisations, such as NGOs and organisations of waste collectors, governmental entities and private enterprises. The main aim is to eradicate child labour at open dumps, eradication of open dumps and promotion of integral solid waste management systems with the inclusion of the waste pickers (Dias 2007). In 2003 the Inter-ministerial Committee of Social and Economic Inclusion of Collectors of Recyclable Material (Ciisc)⁹ was created. It is the main forum for dialogue between the MNCR and the Brazilian government, in total 22 federal state entities participate, mainly ministries, public financial institutions and public enterprises. It aims to create public policies and support programs to improve the socio-economic conditions of the recyclers and to enhance their autonomy. The above mentioned decree of 2006 and the law of 2007 can be mentioned as the main outcomes. Two other important outcomes are the Pro-Collector Programme, among federal entities aiming at the social and economic inclusion of collectors (Decree n° 7405/2010) and the National Solid Waste Policy (PNRS)¹⁰ (Law n° 12305/2010). The PNRS was established after a participatory process of social dialogue involving the government, recycling companies, civil society organisations, universities and the MNCR. In this policy the associations and cooperatives of collectors are referred to as the priority stakeholders in the recycling process, especially in the selective collection of urban solid waste. In recent years cooperatives of collectors have established contracts and agreements with the municipalities to perform part of the solid waste management. The Pro-Collector Programme supports training, capacity-building, technical assistance, research, acquisition of equipment and reforms in infrastructure, besides promotion of commercialising networks and production chains integrated by cooperatives. From 2010 till 2012 the national project Cataforte¹¹, supported by the National Secretary of Solidarity Economy (SENAES)¹² aimed at training and capacity-building of the collectors of recyclable materials and the strengthening of their organisations and their networks attended more than 10,600 collectors, in 19 states of Brazil. One of the main results was the training of informal waste pickers and their participation in the associations and cooperatives. Before the project the cooperative COOTRACAR¹³, in Gravataí in Rio Grande do Sul, counted with 40 collectors, during the project 200 waste collectors were trained, in 2012 about 100 collectors were members of COOTRACAR. This means that 60 informal waste collectors have integrated a solidarity economy

⁹ Comitê Interministerial de Inclusão Social e Econômica dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis (Ciisc).

¹⁰ Política Nacional de Resíduos Sólidos (PNRS).

¹¹ Projeto Fortalecimento do Associativismo e do Cooperativismo dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis: formação para a autogestão, assistência técnica e mobilização – Cataforte.

¹² Secretaria Nacional de Economia Solidária (Senaes).

¹³ Cooperativa dos Trabalhadores, Carroceiros e Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis (COOTRACAR).

initiative, and 100 are in process of integrating the cooperative (Zeeland 2013). The effective integration depends on the implementation of the PNRS by the local municipality, to contract the services of COOTRACAR for the collective selection.

In Colombia, in 1990, the Association of Recyclers of Bogotá¹⁴ (ARB) was formed, between four cooperatives, with the support of a NGO. The ARB is an association of cooperatives; the main task is to organise informal waste pickers in cooperatives and to encourage their participation in the ARB (Samson 2009). The dialogue established between ARB and the municipal government of Bogotá, resulted in the Master Plan of Integrated Waste Management (PMIRS)¹⁵ in 2004. The PMIRS establishes new modalities in service delivery with the inclusion of informal waste pickers in urban solid waste management (Turcotte and Gómez 2012). The challenges regarding the implementation of the PMIRS for the organisations of waste pickers will be discussed below.

In India, in the city of Pune, the informal self-employed waste pickers organised themselves into the union KKP KP¹⁶ in 1993. The cooperative of waste pickers Solid Waste Collection Handling (SWaCH) was founded in 2007. The cooperative provides services to the municipality regarding solid waste management. Interventions of KKP KP and negotiation resulted in the recognition by the municipality. A legal framework enabled the partnership. In 2000 the municipal solid waste rules were established, regarding the organisation of door to door collection of waste and waste segregation. In 2002 the Maharashtra Government Resolution of the Department of Water Supply and Sanitation addresses the door to door collection of waste to cooperatives and organisations of waste pickers. In 2006 the Maharashtra Government Resolution of the Department of Urban Development, establishes 2007 for the implementation of 100% door to door collection with preference for cooperatives of waste pickers, especially regarding women, and defines a user fee for the door to door collection (Chikarmane 2012).

The experiences of the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers in Brazil, Colombia and India show the importance of the coalitions between community groups, social movements and NGOs to influence public policies and to strengthen SSE. The participatory processes have resulted in innovative institutional arrangements with the inclusion of informal waste pickers. However with new institutional arrangements come new challenges.

Challenges for Sustainability of SSE: Collective Action and Public Policies

Participation is a prominent feature of SSE, expressed in the social, economic and productive patterns and ways of organising enterprise activities. But it is also fundamental to the process of decision making regarding development and public policies, based on the idea of inclusion of those most affected by the interventions and the respective policies. However the participatory processes do not necessarily involve

¹⁴ Asociación de Recicladores de Bogotá (ARB).

¹⁵ Plan Maestro de Manejo Integral de Resíduos Sólidos (PMIRS).

¹⁶ Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP).

and benefit all groups of a community, according to Bina Agarwal, important sections can be excluded within seemingly participatory institutions, for example women, resulting in “participatory exclusions” (Agarwal 2001: 1623). This stresses the importance of gendered analysis, which evaluates participation not only in terms of citizenship and empowerment, but also for its potential effects on equity and efficiency, given pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities. The collective organisations of waste pickers count with a high percentage of women. A research between collective organisations in the south of Brazil demonstrates that circa 80% of the members are women (UFRGS 2010). Data from 26 organisations of collectors, totalling 1225 members, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, affirm that the women do participate effectively in the management of the collective organisations; nearly 75% of the governing committees are made up by women (Zeeland 2013). However, when it comes down to the participation in forums and councils, especially at the national level, there is a predominance of men. This shows the importance for policies and practices to overcome the divisions in power relations related to gender.

From the 1990’s onwards several studies focus on how participatory processes arise and what makes them work, especially related to collective action in the context of natural resource management. Elinor Ostrom emphasizes the diversity of institutional arrangements for governing common-pool resources and public goods. Among the structural factors affecting the likelihood of increased cooperation she highlights the central role of trust in coping with social dilemmas and the importance of “fitting institutional rules to a specific social-ecological setting” (Ostrom 2010: 642). Another important aspect regarding the capability of community groups to develop an effective regime of governing common-pool resources is the “recognition of the right to organize by a national or local government” (Ostrom 2005: 268). The importance of the recognition of the right to organise will be illustrated by the examples of institutional arrangements involving community groups who share natural resource management with local governments, regarding solid waste management.

In general three key elements are considered in integrated sustainable waste management systems, respectively, waste collection with regard to improve public health; waste disposal to diminish the adverse environmental impacts; and waste prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery of resources (UNHABITAT 2010: 87). The Global Alliance of Waste Pickers and the national movements advocate for the social and economic inclusion of waste pickers. It is recognised that informal and community actors play an important role in waste management systems. Estimates are that the urban waste systems in most low- and middle-income countries, provides a livelihood for about 0.5 percent of the urban population (UNHABITAT 2010)¹⁷. The challenge to expand SSE and include informal waste pickers in solidarity economy initiatives depends on the interaction between collective action and public policies, at federal, state and municipal level.

In 2009 the *Ikageng Ditamating* Recycling and Waste Management Group was founded in Metsimaholo in South Africa, with forty-nine members. This was a merging from two groups of waste pickers at the Sasolburg dump, *Ikageng* composed mainly by women and older men and *Ditamating* composed by young men. The cooperative is divided in two groups, regarding the activities of collecting materials and of sorting the

¹⁷ These estimates are based on data gathered across 10 reference cities.

materials. After the union of the two groups into one collective organisation, the income of the members has increased. However the main challenges continues the recognition and official participation in the municipal waste management system through a formal contract to recycle materials at the dump (Samson 2009). The example from South Africa shows the importance of collective action, but reinforces the importance of the recognition and commitment of the municipal government for the sustainability of SSE.

In Pune in India the municipal government recognised the importance of the collective organisation of waste collectors and formalised a memorandum of understanding with the cooperative SWaCH regarding door to door collection of waste in 2008. SWaCH counts with 100 members, women constitute 78 per cent of membership. The main activities are daily door to door waste collection from households, offices and shops, as well as sorting the materials and commercialising them. The members have more stable incomes than other waste pickers in India. Regularly the three stake-holders, respectively, the cooperative, the municipality and neighbourhood civic groups, meet to evaluate the service delivery as well as to reaffirm the common goals. The service of collection of waste is remunerated by a municipal grant as well as by a service user fee. However there exists some resistance against the service user fee, which means a threat for the system. Another threat is the incineration of waste, which diminishes the recovering of recyclable materials and excludes the collectors (Chikarmane 2012).

The Master Plan of Integrated Waste Management (PMIRS) established new modalities in service delivery with the inclusion of informal waste pickers in solid waste management in Bogotá, Colombia. The PMIRS was planned in 2004 and the first phase was implemented between 2006 and 2008. The formal waste management system includes the recyclers, members of the cooperatives. A main challenge is how to include more informal collectors. The formal and informal waste management systems continue to co-exist. As Turcotte and Gómez (2012) point out there is an important difference between the collectors organised in cooperatives and the informal waste pickers. The organised collectors have access to social security, better working conditions and more stable earnings. But even for the informal individual waste pickers the PMIRS has resulted in some positive outcomes, there is a growing recognition of their activities. The cooperatives realise the commercialisation of the recyclable materials and try to advance in the production chain. However, “they compete at a disadvantage against other private sector actors” (Turcotte and Gómez 2012: 30). The case-study shows the importance of training and assistance for the cooperatives to acquire technical skills, as well as access to capital. Thus reinforcing that recognition and a legal framework are fundamental to include informal recyclers into urban solid waste management, but this has to be accompanied by public investments in training and acquisition of equipment and infrastructure of the cooperatives.

In Brazil the inclusion of waste collectors in solid waste management systems has advanced since the 1990s. Belo Horizonte was one of the first cities to adopt an integrated solid waste management system with the social and economic inclusion of the collectors of recyclable materials in 1993. The first association of waste collectors, ASMARE¹⁸ was formed in 1990. The associations and cooperatives of waste collectors are supported by the municipal government through the Department of Public Cleansing, the Secretariat of Social Assistance and through the participatory budget

¹⁸ Associação dos Catadores de Papel Papelão e Material Reciclável, ASMARE.

system. Although there are many challenges, this integrated approach of support for the waste collectors, guarantees their economic as well as social inclusion, and guarantees the sustainability of the SSE organisations. The case of COOTRACAR in Gravataí, also demonstrates the importance of public recognition as well as public support for capacity-building and infrastructure. In 2009 the cooperative signed a contract with the municipality for the selective collection. This contract opened the possibility to include a large share of the informal waste collectors. Over 200 collectors were trained; during 2012 the cooperative had 100 members. However a political change in the municipality led to instability regarding the payment for the services and regarding the continuity of the contract. This in turn affected the membership of the cooperative, downsizing their number. One way to overcome the dependency on the municipality was to establish direct contacts with community organisations, schools, shops and other organisations. Besides the contract the cooperative depends upon the commercialisation of the recyclable materials. However one of the main challenges is the insertion into the capitalist market, where the cooperatives face the competition of the large capitalist companies, much better equipped. According to Gonçalves-Dias (2009) the cooperatives of waste collectors have limited conditions to establish the rules of the game and need to adjust themselves to the interests and technical demands of the large companies who buy the materials. The lack of capital to invest in equipments and reforms is one of the main bottlenecks. According to Alexandre Camboim, coordinator of COOTRACAR, another challenge is to combine service delivery at high quality standards with democratic management cultivating relationships based on cooperation and solidarity. The case demonstrates the vulnerability of the integrated solid waste management systems and reinforces the importance of collective action and of public policies compromised with transformation at the national, state and municipal level to guarantee the sustainability of the SSE organizations.

Conclusion

The SSE experiences in integrated solid waste management demonstrate the importance of collective action and coalitions between community groups, social movements and NGOs. The sustainability of the social and solidarity economy depends on effective public policies and on a network of advocacy and intervention involving other institutions, such as social movements, community groups and NGOs. The growing organisation of the movements of waste pickers and their alliance with NGOs has made major progress through public policies which strengthen the SSE. Examples from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, South Africa and India show that with the aid and backing of NGOs and with public support it might be possible to approach a significant part of the informal popular economy to SSE. Practice shows that for effective implementation of public policies, the mobilization and coalition of the social movements and NGOs need to be sustained at state and municipal level.

The sustainability of SSE organizations is not merely a technical or economic question, but, it is essentially a political one, depending on public policies compromised with a process of social transformation. Significant shifts in public policies at all levels require collective action, to achieve the strengthening of SSE. The lack of effective implementation of public policies and programs undermines the feasibility and sustainability of SSE organizations. Besides public policies, support through programs, projects and social networking are other elements essential for sustainability. To expand

SSE, public policies and supporting programs are needed to establish a significant change in quality in the organizations of the informal and popular economy, so as to converge to SSE.

The last decade shows promising experiences of shared governance of solid waste between the municipal government and cooperatives of waste collectors. The incipient experiences show the potential to expand the SSE in important economic sectors in society, as for solid waste management. At the same time with the growing responsibility come increasing challenges as, for example, the limited conditions of the organisations of the collectors of recyclable materials to establish the rules of the games, they have to adjust themselves to the interests of the private companies. Another challenge is towards the management, to combine economic feasibility with democratic management. Therefore the support of public programs should also be directed towards strengthening SSE to effectively build up the capacity to meet the demands which arise with the new possibilities shaped by the public policies.

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