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What about Sustainable Improvement? Current Efforts and Challenges in the Work of the Municipal Government to Improve the Rights of the Garbage Pickers in Fortaleza, Brazil

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What about Sustainable Improvement?

Current Efforts and Challenges in the work of the
Municipal Government to improve the Rights of the
Garbage Pickers in Fortaleza, Brazil.

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Personal Motives for Research.....	5
Importance of the Research.....	6
Literature Review.....	7-8
The Different Exploitations.....	8-9
Why use the word ‘rights’?.....	10
Location of the Research.....	11
Methodology.....	11
Definition of Terms and Projects.....	13-17
Sustainable visions: Similarities and Differences.....	18-23
Learning from the Past: Case studies of Jangurussu and Tancredo Neves.....	24-28
Why do these programs come and go?.....	28-30
How is the Pilot Project contributing to these visions?.....	30
Challenges.....	32-35
Expectation: Viable or Not.....	38
Conclusion.....	41
Postscript.....	43
Indications for Further Research.....	44
Appendix.....	44
Weakness of my Paper.....	46
Bibliography.....	47

Abstract

The government programs seek to improve the condition of the oppressed and the poor, but very few truly have a sustainable positive impact on the lives of the poor. This research, through a case study of a program, Pilot Project of Selective Collection in Jangurussu, run by municipal officers for the benefit of garbage pickers (*catadores do lixo* in Brazil), attempts to define what characterizes and ensures the sustainable improvement in the work-related rights of catadores in Fortaleza, a city in Northeast Brazil, through seeking perspectives from two important stakeholders, the catadores and the municipal officers. Organizing catadores into legal organizations, implanting selective collection and providing infrastructure were visions shared by both catadores and the officers, while lack of government accountability and lack of immediate results was a challenge expressed only by the catadores. The similarities in the visions led to collaborations while the differences in visions of the two players lead to certain challenges faced by the project. Open dialogue about each other's visions would help recognize the true cause, and potential solution, of the challenge being faced. For example, creating mediums through which catadores can hold the Prefeitura accountable helps them give more ownership, control and input into process, and will increase the trust between catadores and Prefeitura (municipal government)—a currently sensed challenge. In order to truly have a sustainable impact, it is important that an initiative includes the beneficiaries since the planning stage, dialogue about the sustainable vision, constantly question 'why?' when confronted with a challenge and always seek to find the cause of the problem. Ultimately, how much initiative one is willing to take in collaboration with other partners to mitigate challenges will determine the viability of heading one step closer to their sustainable vision each time.

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Introduction

My research emerges from an interest in what government efforts are being carried out for the sustainable improvement of the work-related ‘rights’ of catadores in Fortaleza. I don’t mean to use the word *rights* as legal entitlement that catadores already have. In fact, there exists no law that attributes any form of rights to catadores (Fernanda and Sergio Interview). Rather, I use the word *rights* describing that the catadores are justified and entitled to claim government action for the improvement of their working conditions, earnings, health protection, education and organization amidst of all the lacks that will be listed below. My preoccupation with sustainability stems from knowing that many government efforts of the past in Fortaleza have collapsed due to a variety of reasons. Plus there are structural challenges that need to be overcome for any sustainable improvement, which Farmer terms as ‘structural violence’. As a way to begin to look for sustainable solutions i.e. solutions that last, Farmer suggest two things. First, it is important to ask why the exploitation exists. Identifying the cause and outlining the steps to eradicate the cause are the first steps. To better understand the cause, it is absolutely necessary to communicate with the people, who are being exploited about their condition and needs, because only they can determine what they need, and work with them to plan action (144-46). Hence, I decided to let the catadores and the municipal officers define their sustainable vision for the improvement of work-related catador rights.

Personal Motives for Choice of Research Topic

Three personal interests guided this research:

1. Interest in right of a person to a decent livelihood and all other work-related rights because source of income is the source for all other rights (such as water, sanitation, food, education etc) for the urban poor, a population that I am generally interested in.
2. Interest in government’s perspective and its efforts on the rights of any oppressed category of labor.
3. Interest in defining and distinguishing sustainable improvement from superficial and short-term improvement.

Importance of the Research

Even though, the catadores do lixo exist for generations, there does not seem to be a written record of any sustainable and collaborative government effort to improve the condition of catadores in Fortaleza. This research attempts to document the sustainable visions (for the improvement in the work-right of catadores) of municipal officers and catadores involved in a fairly promising government project, which is still in its very initial stages. This research undertakes an important evaluation based on the criteria created by the stakeholders (creators and beneficiaries) of the project itself. First, this documentation seeks to communicate the catadore perspectives to the municipal officers, and vice verca (probably through a third party) not only about their ideal vision, but current evaluation of the reality based on their vision. Such communication, while the project is in progress, will hopefully open new doors to healthy dialogue, serving as a guide to improvement in the relations between the two players thereby positively influencing the project. Moreover, there are many more organized and unorganized catadores that need to be informed about this initiative of Prefeitura along with other partners, so that they can get ideas on how to best organize in order to seek their own benefit. Although I do not expect a catadora/e to read my report, I hope that NGOs such as Forum do Lixo e Cidadania and Pastoral do Povo da Rua use the information from this project to create small information panels, or discussion groups, to raise awareness among other catadores. On another note, this research paper could also be used as an advocacy tool to persuade the next administration of the Prefeitura to continue the project and expand it to benefit other cataodore groups in Fortaleza. Also, this paper, as an independent evaluation of a government program, could be used to seek grants for continuation or extension of the project. This paper exists in both Portuguese and English languages.

Literature Review

According to Paul Constance, the informal profession of garbage picking or *catadore* has existed forever. But what has changed in the last few decades, is the unprecedented and rapid growth of the cities without most of them having adequate, administrative systems to collect, process and determine the destination of solid waste of the city. Second, there has been an equally rapid increase in the number of paper, cardboard, plastic and glass packaging, along with a parallel growth in the recycling industries of these materials. The third, and the one that most interests me, is the recent economic crises has left millions of people unemployed, and many of them have resorted to informally collecting recyclable materials, the people who are called, '*catadoras/es*' in Brasil (1). One of my informants, Fernanda Veras, the municipal officer elaborates that this unemployment or lack of socio-economic opportunities for people in the rural areas is a result of the lack of investment by the Federal Government in the rural sector, owing to which many of these people migrate to the cities in search of a livelihood (Interview, 10)

The Difference Exploitations: Lack of Infrastructure or Capital

According to Fernanda's interview, the Forum estimates that there exist around 4 thousand *catadores* in Fortaleza today, but there has been no official census done yet (Interview). Firestone characterizes *catadores* based on the type of environment they work in—"catadores that work/live in open dumps, *catadores* that work/live on the street, *catadores* that work within a cooperative, association, or company, and *catadores* that only collect aluminum cans" (7/23/03). I have had contact only with *catadores* who work in partially organized cooperative or association in Fortaleza. Currently, their conditions are similar to a *catadora* who collects materials from an open dump or one, who works, pulling a hand cart, and collects recyclable materials from the street and splits open domiciliary garbage bags. The difference is that they benefit from some group support, and help from NGOs and government programs. Stating that "90% of the material in Brazil's recycling industry is processed or collected by *catadores*" and "these informal collectors in about 3,800 municipalities' process approximately 20% of the urban waste generated in Brazil (1)," Firestone concludes that the recycling industry is

dependent on the catadores. I would add that the government is benefiting economically and environmentally. The catadores reduce the impact of solid waste on the environment, they diminish the amount of waste that goes into the aterro, which is costly to maintain both environmentally and economically and they fuel a profitable recycling industry without getting a fair pay. Hence, both the government and the recycling industries are profiting from the catadore but not giving the catadores the remuneration they deserve (Ronivaudo Journal, 43).

Currently, there exists a chain of exploitation, which begins with the catadora, either collecting from a dump or a usina or the streets. Often these catadores have their hand cart or a make-shift place to store the material they collected (often they do not), and they have no other alternative but to sell to some other entity who has these infrastructural facilities. These entities are the big and small depositories that have space to store large amounts of recyclables, and a truck to transport them to the industry. Generally, there exist about 2 or 3 depositories between a catadore and an industry. In this exploitative chain, the depositories eat up the profit that the catadore deserves solely due to the availability of infrastructure such as truck, shed to store materials (*galpao*), balance and *prensa* (used for compacting recyclable materials), while the industries have monopolistic control over the price of the material¹. Results a vicious cycle—lack of infrastructure causes exploitation of income of the catadore, which prevents them from saving money to buy some of this investment. But there are other ‘lacks’ that catadores suffer, which contribute to health hazards, “alienation and abandonment (Hudson)”, and disunity between the catadores, that is outlined below with the help of other secondary sources.

Lack of Health Protection

Neysla Rocha (Diario do Nordeste, 04 de Outubro, 2005, Fortaleza, CE) outlines various health risk facing catadores highlighting the lack of physical protection with catadores—especially vulnerability of attaining tuberculosis because of certain pathogens living in the garbage, and spreads commonly through the food that cataodres pick up

¹ Is there any data on how many depositories and how many industries exist to understand who has the control of the price in the market?

from the garbage in desperation of no other alternative. Two articles by Maristela Crispim (Diário do Nordeste, 04 de Outubro, 2005, Fortaleza, CE) describe the situation of the aterro sanitário of Maracanau in Fortaleza. Despite it being prohibited that catadores enter the Aterro, especially the minors (below 18 years), the children manage to enter almost every night. Also, the cooperative ComVida work is based on competition between catadores scavenging recyclable materials from the compacted garbage, in which the men always end up earning more than the women. They do not have individual protection equipment (EPIs) and no trace of infrastructure or a *galpao*. The catadores are vulnerable to many diseases, including skin cancer. Eridan Leite, vice-coordinator of Fórum Estadual Lixo e Cidadania do Ceará, expresses the sense of urgency for improving the situation of catadores by, “I don't agree that we must wait more for an administration to solve the environmental questions, the problem is here and now.” Another article by Neysla Rocha (Diário do Nordeste, 04 de Outubro, 2005, Fortaleza, CE) lists the various dangers and diseases for the catadores working on the Jangurussu ancient dump, such as circulation of trucks and machines for the children of the catadores, the gases released owing to the degradation of garbage, fire outbreak, sharp objects, potential contaminants such as the virus of hepatitis B, hepatitis C and AIDS. Historically, the dump was deactivated and a factory was created for the catadores that slightly improved the conditions. For the past four-five months, the usina of Jangurussu is almost non-functional, and the situation with the catadores there is no different than it was when they worked in the garbage dump before its deactivation in 1998.

Lack of Education

Crispim points out an important strain of competition that exists among catadores in the cooperative of Maracanau. Because of the lack of education, sense of alienation they feel owing to the economic and social abandonment, most catadores don't automatically have a vision to improve their condition. In my Projeto Comunitario research, Jose Ribamar and Joao were examples of two unorganized catadores that had no hope or vision for improving their situation (Valiulla, Journal, 46-52). Without any help from the exterior (for example, government programs and non-governmental organizations), the catadores don't realize that uniting with other catadoras, they can

build a force, which would give them more political weight in extracting benefits from the government and other organization, plus negotiating a fairer price while they sell material directly to the industry. They see the other catadore as someone who they compete with to get better materials and a depository to sell for a better price. It's only catadores such as Bento and Maria Crioza (Valiulla, Journal, 46-52), who have recieved some training by different NGOs or the government, that have the consciousness that unity between catadores will make them stronger. Although, such efforts of educating catadores are too few compared to the immense number of unorganized catadores in Fortaleza that need such conscientization and organizing.

Why use the word 'rights'?

By using the word 'rights', I want to imply an entitlement to the urgent addressing of these lacks. Hunting for a government initiative that works to improve the work-related rights² of catadores, my prime question was: How are the current initiatives carried on by the Prefeitura for the catadoras/es, along with other partners, and future visions of these two stakeholders heading toward the sustainable improvement of the work-rights of the catadores, as defined by these two stakeholders? How do the visions relate to the reality, and what challenges need to be overcome? Why do these challenges exist? How can future visions and expectations of each player inform the viability of mitigating these challenges to move toward sustainability? Emerging from the theoretical perspectives of the two stakeholders, I will compare the past with the present of two case studies to determine a list that characterizes the sustainable improvement of the work-related rights of catadores. I will analyze the significance of the convergence and divergences of the visions and the implications for the relation between the two stakeholders. Next, I will elaborate on the Pilot Project and how it is contributing to the visions, and the challenges that it presents. What are the characteristics of these challenges and how do future plans and expectations aim to influence them or not?

² Work related rights include right to fair income, decent working conditions, right to health and safety in the workplace, right to organization and political bargaining (International Recognized Labor Rights from ILO (International Labor Organization).

Location of Research

Majority of my research took place within the complex of Jangurussu owned by EMLURB, the department within Prefeitura responsible for urban cleaning in Fortaleza. Apart from this, the research was carried following the municipal officers, catadoras/es and the NGO and Bank representatives, in their work or residential environments. These included the Prefeitura offices of SEINF and EMLURB, Banco do Brasil office opposite the Castelao Stadium, the houses of two catadoras in Jangurussu and Dia das Macedos communities, house of my advisor, and cars of my informants or buses. A small part of my research took place in ‘Seminaria da Prainha’ on Avenida Santos Dumont, where the course, Lixo e Cidadania’ took place.

Methodology

My universe of research mainly consists of observing all the participants in the Jangurussu Pilot Project, and the course, Lixo e Cidadania. Out of the estimate of 4000 catadores, there are only 16 organized groups of catadore within the Forum. Except the the 170 official members in the cooperative of Jangurussu, the average number of catadores in each of the other groups is fifteen. Out of these 16 organized groups, I have observed in the course setting, where 2 or 3 from each group on an average is present (except 10 from Jangurussu). Moreover, I was in field only since 11th May to 31st May, and have attended three classes and made about eight visits to Jangurussu.

During my visits to Jangurussu, I found that only about 55 or 60 people were working at any given time. But during the election, there were 125 votes in total, which comes closer to the 170 officially registered members of the cooperative. Hence, as is evident, my universe of research is fairly small—a few most-politically active catadores from the Jangurussu and the most politically active catadores in the course. Hence these personalities, their initiative to act may or may not be representative of rest of the catadores in the organized groups, but might be closer to what kind of attitude a catadora needs to take in order to ensure sustainable improvement of their lives. Apart from this, there are a couple of thousands of catadores that are not organized right now, who I have no knowledge about, partly because a thorough census has never been carried out (conversation with Anastacia, Jornal, 46). My universe of research is not representative

of these unorganized sectors of catadores, but again serves as an ideal around which they can try to organize themselves with the help of other partners.

Weak Portuguese language skills and a foreign perspective had more disadvantages in terms of the researcher's aim of accurately and exhaustively observing and recording information. Also, the limited amount of field research, a little over 20 days in itself limits the amount of information I have and thus, my analysis of sustainable improvement of the work-related rights of catadores through government initiatives. In fact, it is an analysis of 'sustainability in the present' and 'sustainability expressed through intentions expectations'. Although obvious, my research is by no means thorough and there are many individual initiatives going on in the current time that I have not been able to record here. Thus it will be necessary to continue this line of research in awareness of all small but fragmented initiatives in order to plan for a coherent and integrated action for the catadores in Fortaleza.

Definition of Terms and Projects³

Pilot Project of Quantitative and Qualitative de *Selective collection* (Selective Collection) with the Inclusion of Catadores and Catadoras

Objectives: To implant a system of selective collection, where grand generators of solid waste such as companies, schools and condomínios from selected 16 neighborhoods would be requested to separate their garbage into dry and humid categories. The dry recyclable materials would be collected and brought to the catadore cooperative, COOSELCO, in Jangurussu. Within this project, the structure of the *usina* will pass through following modifications:

1. Transition from the system of conveyor belts to the system of selective collection according to the model of *silos* (see photograph below).
2. Transition from working with humid and compacted garbage, the catadores will be able to work with dry waste and the maintenance of the machines will decrease
3. Reduction in the maintenance cost because the conveyor belts and bobcat would be removed in the long term.⁴



Responsible for the Project: Foundation Bank of Brasil, Prefeitura Municipal of Fortaleza and NGOs.

³ The Definitions of terms and projects should be used throughout the paper to understand the information.

⁴ The descriptions and the photograph of the Pilot Project, Course, 'Lixo e Cidadania', Policy, Plenary, and the involved governmental and non-governmental organizations are written by Fernanda Veras, my advisor, and translated by me.

Course, ‘Lixo e Cidadania (Waste and Citizenship), is six-month long for catadores and catadoras about general notions of the environment, technical methods of recycling, interpersonal relations and associativism and cooperativism. The course began on the 26th April, and I attended three classes every Wednesday at 2.00 pm. The course will be helpful, but at present has only about 55-60 catadores attending, that also form part of the Forum.

Policies for the catadores

There is no policy about the work or rights of the catadores, at the municipal, state or federal level. A policy on solid waste with the inclusion of the catadores is being discussed at the Federal level, but the result is not guaranteed. But there exists a Grupo de Trabalho, GT, that was discussing actions and policies for the question of catadore. When I spoke to Anastacia, she said they had almost finished the research, ready for presentation on the 14th June, 2006.

Plenary – The plenary is organized by the Forum in Fortaleza for all the organized catadores to be present and share their local reality, discuss problems and find solutions, a way to create unity among the groups. It meets the last Sunday of every month at 9 am in the morning, at Semianria da Prainha on Avenida Santos Dumont.

Cooperative – The objective of a cooperative is the union of people that can offer services of a collective and solidary manner, and that commits and assumes shared responsibilities. A cooperative must have minimum of 20 people with common interests, organized in a democratic form, respecting the rights and responsibilities of each member, acting without profitable ends. Each member has the right to only one vote (Goncalves, 30).

Association – An association is a civil society, formed by people that have common objectives, with no limit on the number of members. The association has to pay lesser tax than a cooperative according to Brazilian tax laws (Goncalves, 32).

Selective collection – Literally translated into ‘selective collection’, it refers to generators of solid waste separating materials at the source, so that the recyclable materials could be reutilized or recycled, and waste going to *aterro sanitario* be reduced.

Aterro Sanitario – the locality where the garbage of a city is commonly sent. It is a precarious solution to garbage disposal as there is a risk of explosion owing to the accumulation of methane gas as the waste degrades (Gradwohl, 49).

Involved Organs of Prefeitura trying to resolve the problem at the level of the discussions and projects

Empresa Municipal de Limpeza Urbana (EMLURB) – Responsible for Urban Cleaning in Fortaleza

Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Econômico - SDE

Secretaria de Educação e Assistência Social -

Comissão Fortaleza Bela- Gabinete da Prefeita

Agencia Reguladora de Fortaleza

Secretaria de Infra-estrutura - SEINF

Other organs involved in trying to resolve the program:

Fórum Lixo e Cidadania (National & Fortaleza) – The National Forum is an articulation of approximately 50 governmental and non-governmental organizations, created in 1998 by the stimulation and under the coordination of UNICEF—a fund of United Nations for infancy—envisioning the eradication of child labor with garbage in Brasil. One of their objectives is to promote the social and economic inclusion of the catadores of recyclable materials, especially through supporting their organization and the program of selective collection. The Forum in Fortaleza was formed in 2000, and is currently coordinated by Christina in Caritas (Ministerio das Cidades, 9). There is a meeting held on the last Wednesday of the every month at 2 pm in ‘Seminar da Prainha’, where NGOs and GOs, private organizations, banks, students, catadores, etc who are interested in the rights of catadores are welcome.

Cáritas Arquidiocesana de Fortaleza is one of the major NGOs working with catadores do lixo in Fortaleza, and coordinates the Forum and Plenary of the catadores.

Pastoral do Povo da Rua – An NGO that works to organize populations living on the streets or abandoned, in this context, the catadore groups in general. They initiated the organization of catadores in ASMARE.

Associação dos Catadores de Papel, Papelão, e Materiais Reaproveitáveis de Belo Horizonte (ASMARE) – In 1987, with the support of Pastoral da Rua, the street catadores of Belo Horizonte initiated a process of social and productive organization, founding an association in 1990 that permits today 380 people access to citizenship. This association has become an inspiration of grassroots organization for catadores from other regions in Brasil, including Fortaleza. ASMARE helps in organizing other catadores too, and form a major part of Movimento Nacional dos Catadores.

Instituto Nenuca do Desenvolvimento Sustentável (INSEA) – An NGO located in Belo Horizonte, and responsible for helping to organize ASMARE.

Fundação Banco do Brasil (FBB) – The work of FBB is focused in the areas of Education and Culture and the generation of Income and Work, with investment in processes that would become self-sustainable.

AND

Movimento Nacional dos Catadores – It's a nationwide collaboration of catadores participating in the policymaking process for the policy on solid waste with the inclusion of catadores, a majority is formed by ASMARE.

Política Nacional dos Resíduos Sólidos – A federal level policy, currently under discussion, for the administration and final destination of the solid waste in Brasil, prioritizing the policy of reduction, reutilization and recycling of the waste (Sampaio, 1).

SANEAR is a State agency in charge of water, sewage and other sanitation issues.

Diagnostico Rapido Participativo Urbano (DRPU) - This collaborative research process was undertaken for the Pilot Project of Selective Collection in Jangurussu, the purpose of which is to get a sense of the perspective of the *catadores*, their daily lives and social reality, their histories and processes of organization (Fernanda Interview).

Diagnostico Tecnico de Geracao De Residuos em Fortaleza (DTGR) – This research was undertaken for the Pilot Project too, for the characterization of quality of the solid waste of the city that entailed how many kilos per habitants of waste generated in Fortaleza and to determine the areas that could provide the highest amount of recyclable waste for the implantation of selective collection (Fernanda Interview).

Sociedade Comunitaria de Reciclagem de Lixo do Pírambu (SOCRELP), is a community association of *catadores* that was founded in 1994. They are the only one of their kind – an association run by the community – in the city of Fortaleza. Today, the association has about 30 registered *catadores* that collect recycling from the street. SOCRELP (Firestone).

COOPREMARCE – Cooperativa de Pre-Beneficiamento de Materiais Reciclaveis do Ceara – This cooperative was formed in 2002 with the support of the State Government for infrastructure, where the members set up stalls in ‘Pao de Acucar’s’ to request customers to donate recyclable materials to their cooperative. Plus they buy materials from *catadores* and sell it to the industry too (Valiulla, Journal, 15).

Cooperativa dos Trabalhadores Autonomos da Selecao e Coleta de Material Reciclaveis Ltda (COOSEL) – the cooperative of the *catadores* in Jangurussu

Similarities in the Sustainable Visions

The first step of this project is to define the sustainable visions as articulated by my four informants, the similarities and the differences. Fernanda understands the need for providing them with a consistent and sufficient earning that would provide them with a life of dignity and respect, sharing the language of Cesar and Glauciamar. The latter two expressed it as a minimum salary (\$R 350) per month, while Cesar included, '*sexta basica*', indicating his struggle with meeting basic food needs. All four informants agreed the need for the catadores to unite, form an official organization (either cooperative or association), combine their daily collection and sell in larger volumes directly to the industry. The unity of catadores has been emphasized by all, and has been talked as the solution to the achievement of the most of the other rights in a sustainable fashion.

The system of selective collection as explained will give the organized catadores a guaranteed supply of dry, higher quality materials, which would improve the price. Plus the catadores need to be helped with infrastructure such as shed (*galpao*), balance, *pressa*, and the equipment for individual protection. Although, organization of the catadores into legally recognized organizations and implanting selective collection to include all the catadores are not simple goals. One thing that is clear is that the catadores cannot achieve either of the goals without any educational or infrastructural help. Hence initial help from various partners including the government is obvious. Organizing, unity and selective collection will give them the economic weight and decision-making power in the market to ensure a good selling price from the industry. Succinctly stated by Sergio, the Pilot Project for Jangurussu aims to reach 10 tons of recyclable materials per day, calculated according to the price of recyclable materials in 2005, which would give a minimum salary to 200 members of the cooperative (3). Plus, as Cesar and Ronivaldo, the President of Emlurb envisions, they will have more credibility and official status to demand from the government and private organizations for any assistance they need. This shared same vision of the final goal is a victory of the Forum, the municipal officers, the politically-active catadores and a series of seminars, meetings and courses that they have together conducted.

There are also unique visions coming from different experiences, and they complement each other. One such is the perspective on policy that needs to be

communicated. Fernanda strongly asserts that the rights of catadores of such as of a salary that allows a dignified life, individual protection equipment, right to health and vaccination should be guaranteed through a policy on solid waste with the inclusion of catadores, at the municipal, state and federal level (6).” For example, Sergio said that it is important to formulate a policy to define the rights of the catadores officially, plus to legally oblige the future administrations to continue the work related to the rights of the catadores. In his words, “I don’t know yet how the rights of the catadores could be secured (by the Prefeitura according to my question). The Prefeito Luisiani Liz of Fortaleza, that assumed her position the past year (2005) is preoccupied with this question and are developing a policy of solid waste that will deal with it. But we cannot guess because nothing has been placed on paper yet (4).” According to him, the policy and the related law will require every new administration to continue with these efforts, hence ensuring sustainability. Cesar and Glauciamar do not know the need for converting into policy for the effort to be sustainable. Fernanda celebrates the alliance of the Forum do Lixo e Cidadania and the Prefeitura, and hopes for its continuity, because the Forum has expertise on policy issues and the Prefeitura has the power, responsibility and obligation to create policy. On the other hand, Fernanda is pointing out the case study of ASMARE in Belo Horizonte that achieved all its victories from strong grassroots organization accompanied by the law of cooperativism and associativism and NGOs such as Pastoral do Povo da Rua. Without the support of a law, through organizing and forming an association, they could demand help from the Prefeitura, Banco do Brasil with which some catadores in ASMARE could achieve a minimum salary and create the first recycling industry in the state. They are also the catadores forming the major part of National Movement of Catadores and that in Belo Horizonte (Fernanda, 7).

All agree that currently there is a productive chain of exploitation that exists in the recycling industry. Sergio has a different perspective on how to avoid this exploitation, He emphasizes the relationships that needs to be created of the catadores—organized and united—with all the partners in the economic productive cycle, that should be based on commitment, credibility and honesty. I value his perspective, and I would like to add that the relations should have equitable power to negotiate prices in the economic market too. Glauciamar thinks that the catadores of the street often miss out on their daily collection

because ECOFOR collects it all. This brought up the need for the government to include private companies, for example, ECOFOR, that perform tertiarized services of urban cleaning for the Prefeitura, into the discussion of inclusion of catadores so that they find ways to collaboratively work with the catadores. They should participate especially in the implantation of selective collection.

While criticizing the State initiative with COELCE (a company that provides electricity for the state of Fortaleza) about implanting selective collection, she said that there is no guarantee that the benefits will go to a cooperative or an association of catadores, especially since they have not discussed with two important entities: the Forum that is responsible for all the work that is conducted with catadores, and the Prefeitura, the public power present in the city. She said that the initiative lacks accountability, and Fabiana (from Banco do Brasil) emphasized that unlike the Pilot Project of Jangurussu, COELCE hasn't signed any contract with the catadores of the Jangurussu whom they claim to benefit (Lima, Fabio. 14 May, 2006. *Diario do Nordeste*. "Convenio entre UNIFOR e COELCE). On a similar note, can the catadores of Cooselc in Jangurussu really hold the team of the Pilot Project accountable to fulfilling their promise? How? Is the signed contract enough to give COOSELC, the cooperative, power to hold the government accountable? If yes, that in itself is a great move toward sustainability. Dona Glauciamar voices it powerfully when she says, "I have a right to "fazer cobranca" hold the Prefeitura accountable to keep with their promises (Interview). While the municipal officers are taking small steps, Cesar asserts that the government needs to do more. According to him, for the tax money that people pay them, they do very little. "For any change, there must be a change in some part of the government (Interview)."

This is an attempt to summarize the visions for the sustainable improvement of the work-related rights of the catadores by my four key informants—two catadoras/es and two municipal officers. The bullets in bold describe the *concrete steps to be taken* to sustainably achieve the work-related *rights*, which are written as the sub-points⁵:

⁵ I have added the first point to emphasize the basic premise that without initial external help, of either educational help with forming cooperative or association, organizing help, providing initial infrastructure or implantation of selective collection; the catadores on their own cannot initiate a process of sustainable improvement of their rights.

- **Initial support of partners such as Prefeitura, NGOs, Banks, industries etc, but with a clearly expressed timeframe for the support to the catadoras.**
 - a. Equipping catadoras till they are self-sufficient
 - b. Will create responsibility in the catadores and will have that much more control over the process.

- **Education and Organization:** Cooperative or Association (read and write, skills to run a cooperative for all members, if infrastructural support is given, constant push to giving more responsibility on the shoulders of the cooperative, autonomy being the final goal)
 - a. Ownership and Responsibility
 - b. Direct sale to the industry + improve the negotiating power of the catadores against them, thereby improving the price
 - c. Regular and good quality material sold to the industry, thereby improving the price
 - d. Improve the negotiating power with government entities to get benefits,
 - e. Improve the ability and power of the catadores to hold accountable, any organization who promises to benefit. (for ex. ASMARE)
 - f. Relationship between the cooperative/association in the economic productive cycle, that should be based on commitment, credibility, honesty and equitable power structures.

- **Infrastructure** (Shed to work, truck to do coleta (or carroca) and to transport to industry plus IPE equipment, prensa, balanca, good working conditions)
 - a. Base to work
 - b. Slow transition to paying for maintenance from the cooperative or association earnings

- **Selective collection** (Need to administer selective collection per group of catadore so that each group of catadores have a fair share of source of recyclable material,

- role of society to sort their waste into humid and dry, role of politically conscious catadores to educate the society and other catadores):
- a. Consistent and regular supply of dry recyclable materials.
 - b. Improve working conditions and health due to dryness of the waste
 - c. Improve the price of the material, making it consistent and sufficient
 - d. Continuously seek to increase the supply of material
- **Policy on Solid Wastes with inclusion of the Catadores** that would make the above permanent at the municipal, state and the federal level
 - a. so that new governments are obliged to continue their support to the programs
 - b. create an opportunity and commitment for the society, the employees of the industry, the government officers and the catadores themselves
 - c. Collaborate with and use NGO expertise that have worked in the area for years
 - **Need for the Prefeitura to include private companies**, which perform tertiary services of urban cleaning for them, into the discussion of inclusion of catadores
 - a. to find ways that the companies can collaboratively work with the catadores.
 - b. they participate especially in the implantation of selective collection with the inclusion of catadores.

What do the similarities and differences say?

Glauciamar and Cesar though were absolutely clear about their past dissatisfaction with government efforts, and I interpreted it as their need to hold the government accountable. Fernanda voiced the question of accountability for other entities, but not for the Prefeitura, and Sergio didn't either. Probably, the reason is that being the initiators, they don't sense the need for being held accountable. It's only the beneficiaries of a project that would generally want some control of the project so that they can ensure the completion of an initiated project. This differences in the sustainable vision determine the power disparities between the Prefeitura, as the body that makes decisions for the entire city and the catador/a, as a worker who does not have any control over their own daily earnings. How the catadores can hold the government accountable

for the successful completion of a project, is a more complicated question, for the catadores and officials to ponder together.

Conflict in goals such as forming legally recognized catadora organizations, or that selective collection and infrastructure arises when the time frame for achieving this goals is discussed. The government is taking steps slow and steady while the catadores need quicker action, they do not see any results. As Cesar claims, “the government needs to do more (Interview).”

The policy question not mentioned by catadores just suggests that it is way beyond their daily experience, and they have no access to such engaging in such planning and decision-making. The Forum, for example, had the catadores work on a document to send to the Federal Government, detailing the expectations of the catadores from the government. This is a piece of policy written by catadores. The Prefeitura should learn from the Forum’s initiative to make the Federal policy-making process more participatory. Currently, the catadores are not participating at the municipal discussions of GT except directors of associations, which generally are not catadores. There have to be catadores involved in the policy discussions of GT and planning group for the centre. The differences so far have been because catadores definitely have a much greater stake in any projects than the government, plus the extreme need for results for the catadore is due to necessity and lack of control on the projects.

Hence, I add the differences into bullet points as follows:

- **Slight difference in vision**
 - a. Ability and power of the catadores to hold accountable, any organization (especially the Prefeitura) who promises to benefit them.
 - b. Catadores want to see results immediately, while the government is planning for the long term.
 - c. The lack of knowledge or participation about policy discussions, planning stage.

Case Studies of Jangurussu and Tancredo Neves: Learning from the Past

Moving into the field, let us understand the history and the present of two case studies of catadore groups in the communities of Jangurussu and Tancredo Neves, and see what the history has to teach us about sustainability. Before 1987 (Hudson, Journal, 41) and this *usina*, there existed an open garbage dump or a landfill in Jangurussu. The date, 1987, is according to Francisco Cunha, the director of the division of the final destination of the waste under Emlurb. But according to Sergio, the dump was deactivated only in 1996 (Valiulla, Journal, 27). The difference in dates is huge, and if nothing else, indicates that either of our journals has recorded the information wrong or the recorded information with one of the officers is wrong. Dona Nete thinks that the dump was deactivated in 1994, when the project SANEAR came and constructed the three aterros in Maracanau, Aquiraz and Caucaia (informal conversation and Journal, 46-7). Officially, about 600 catadores used to scavenge on this garbage dump (27). Unofficially, different people estimate from 1000-1500 (Glauciamar interview and Dona Nete) surviving on the dump. When the dump was deactivated, there was a huge confusion and only a little more than 200 catadores were included into the newly constructed *usina*⁶. The others were abandoned to fend for themselves. The cooperative already existed, and SANEAR or the Prefeitura conducted the discussion about the administration of the usina only with the directory of Cooselc, not with the catadores. According to Francisco Mooair Rodrigues Cunha, director of the division of EMLURB in December 2005, the past Prefeitura was responsible for (paying for) almost everything, up until 2004. When they stopped supporting, “more and more earnings went to maintaining unreliable equipment (Hudson, ISP, 22). There are multiple answers to the question why did the Prefeitura reduce support depending to whom you ask, and what political interests do they have. According to Jucelene, the directory had to pay for the machines, the Prefeitura didn’t (Valiulla, Journal, 15). While Sergio points out structural challenges such as the Prefeitura withdrawing support from EMLURB leaving the agency with lack of funding and the bureaucracy involved in obtaining a contract with a third party (Interview). He also blames that machines were too old, and overused.

⁶ I am purposely not using dates, because there is almost four years of difference (1994 or 1998?) between people’s estimates as to when the usina was created.

According to conversations with random catadores, any meetings that were held during or after the construction of the *usina* by the SANEAR agency of the State government were only for the directory (Valiulla, Journal, 41-42). They did not call the other members of the cooperative. They were not consulted before the *usina* was constructed. In fact, according to four or five catadores that I have spoken to, from the more than 1000 people that were in the dump, only some 206 were 'called' to work in the *usina*. The only meeting the SANEAR project had with the catadores was to train them how to use the conveyor belts and other machinery (Valiulla, Journal, 41-42).

Currently, the *aterro* (as is called) or *usina de triagem* (literally translated as separation factory) in Jangururussu has only one conveyor belt functioning for the elderly and the women. Dona Glauciamar, one of my key informants, organized her group and led a fight to keep the belt running. She used to earn 100 reais per week when everything was working, and now it has lowered to 30 reais every fifteen days. Within the complex, there exists *usina de triagem*, where the catadores pick recyclables from compacted garbage thrown on these belts, and the catadores separate recyclable from compacted garbage standing on either side of the belt (when the conveyor belts are working). As of now, according to Dona Glauciamar, all the machines are broken. When they first stopped working, most people turned to scavenging (*cascerar* in Portuguese) recyclable materials from the trucks that arrive with new material to the left of the *usina*. The truck arrives at a level elevated than the *usina* and the garbage comes from the big generators such as shops, big malls, schools etc. For this reason, it is higher quality garbage, and only the members of the cooperative can work there. To the right of the *usina*, which is the same floor level as the *usina*, trucks bring domestic waste and use the space as a transfer station, called *transbordo*. From here the garbage goes into the *aterro* of Caucaia. But, the *transbordo* serves a mini garbage dump for the catadoras who are not part of the cooperative. This garbage is of much lesser quality because it has less recyclable materials. Right opposite the *usina* is the huge shed used for storing all the materials collected by the catadores before it is sold. They have a weighing machine and a *prensa* to reduce the volume of the materials before they are transported.

After all past troubles, the Pilot Project started the reformation of the *usina* from the end of this May in 2006. According to combination of information gathered from

Marislene (Valiulla, Journal, 32-33) and the formal interviews of Fernanda (1-3) and Sergio (Interview), the Pilot Project of Selective Collection in Jangurussu was initiated from within the Banco do Brasil, and support of the Prefeitura, and NGOs such as Pastoral do Povo da Rua that already participated, and Instituto Nenuka do Desenvolvimento Sustentavel (INSEA) that was sought for technical expertise. Fernanda Veras from Seinf within Prefeitura, Liana and Sergio from Emlurb within Prefeitura, Fabiana and Fernando from Banco do Brasil, Fernanda from Pastoral Povo da Rua, Marislene and Emerson from the INSEA form the core team of the Pilot Project. According to Marislene, the Regional Organizer from INSEA, they started in around March 2005 with the (DRPU) and (DTGR), the purpose of the former to get a sense of the perspective of the catadores and the latter for the characterization of quality of the waste of the city to determine the viable areas for the implantation of selective collection. They had many meetings with the catadores to win their trust, get organized and then they organized a Seminar in September, 2005 to show the results of the DRPU and DTGR to the interested citizens in the city. The Bolsa Familia was stopped in 2002, and was started through pressure of their team again only for Jangurussu after the Seminar in September. They conducted a survey to calculate how much to contribute per family. By September, they had finished writing up the Pilot Project of Jangurussu, but it could be sent to the Banco do Brasil only in January because they were lacking the backup (SNPJ (signature) of an official organization. Once the project was approved, the Emlurb contracted one company for reforming the conveyor belts, which delayed the process a lot too (Valiulla, Journal, 34).

The cooperative (Cooselc) has around 170 officially registered members, but there is a lot of contestation as to who is a member and who is not. The directory for the past few years was corrupt and non-transparent; it was proven through an auditory that the President, Jucelene, robbed a lot of money from the earnings of the catadoras. Most of the directory did not work as catadoras after they took governance positions. Currently, the member catadoras store their collected materials until the end of the week, gets it weighed on Friday, and paid every fifteen days. Jucelene's husband, Horlando weighs the material, calculates the earnings of each catadore, and handles all the purchase and sales activities. The team also helped catadores see the undemocratic nature of their

cooperative so that they themselves called for a new election of the directory, that I observed on 19th May, 2006. Serea, a tall, skinny man won as the President with 62 votes out of a total of 125. During such an eventful occasion too, most catadores did not have much idea of how a cooperative should work. The only positive answers were that everybody should be united, and everybody should earn equally (Valiulla, Journal, 13 & 14). Others were just depending on the directory to solve all the problems, or would be clueless about their future or the future of their cooperative. While the team had a series of victories to count from the perspective of Marislene and Fernanda, the catadoras were still cynical because their goals were not met yet—a continued supply of recyclable materials and decent working conditions, so that they can earn their daily income.

II. According to Cesar, who has been working in the association of Tancredo Neves for three years, currently they have one truck and a shed to separate the materials. Each member of the association does their own collection, separates the material, and stores in their own house. The truck picks up the material to store temporarily in the *usina* in Tancredo. Other catadores, deposits and organizations from Beach Park sell to their usina, or donate material. Most of this material is not separated, and that is added work. The truck takes the material to sell to the industry on Friday. Each member is paid every Friday after the sales of the material. They can only sell about 20 tons of material now. Currently, they association is struggling and do not have enough capital. He himself stores in his house due to lack of a space to store that causes a danger of diseases plus troubles neighbors.

Historically, Tancredo Neves benefited from a project, called Ilya Ecologica. Dona Nete, the director of SOCRELP, another beneficiary of the project informed me that it was started in 2000, by the Secretary of Social Action, of the State Government, along with a syndicate of recycling industries, *Sende Verde*, a syndicate of recycling industries. They constructed 10 community centers in total, which were run by government-hired people. The catadores sold the material they collected to the nearest community center. The government workers separated the materials as catadores weren't educated about it. The government truck passed through the 10 community centers, collected the material and sold it directly to the industry. Socrelp bought materials from

the 10 community centers, and that's how they were involved in the cycle. According to Dona Nete, the state officers that worked in these community centers were supposed to be in charge of its administration and all the relations between the industry and the community centers only for a limited period of time. They were supposed to train the catadores to manage all of this in the long term, which never happened. Instead, they smuggled a lot of profit. The catadores had no control over the activities, and for them, the community centre was just another depository. The officers kept the profit. When the new State government came in 2002, they formed a new Secretary of Work and Entrepreneurship to be responsible, who slowly started closing these community centers and the program was totally closed by mid-2003. After the closing of the entire program, there was no explanation by the government as to why the program was closed (Valiulla, Journal, 46). According to Cesar, most catadores were left without support, and were expected to organize themselves. Tancredo was successful in organizing due to its leadership, but most other groups dispersed.

Why do these programs come and go?

I. The catadores of Jangurussu were supported once through the *usina*, the support was then removed, and now has come back in the form of the Pilot Project. Why does this happen? What guarantee that the Pilot Project will not be dismantled in the future? This question is difficult to answer. Although, as Dona Glauciamar said to Jane Hudson that ultimately if any change has to happen, the catadores would have to do it, (ISP, 32) I too believe that sustainable improvement will come only if catadores *can autonomously* determine their long-term benefit. Before we ask the question, what is needed to accomplish that, lets understand what went wrong with the SANEAR project in Jangurussu.

What went wrong with the past initiative?

- i. The past directory with President, Jucelene, is proven to be corrupt and non-transparent. Hence, even if the cooperative earned money enough to repair the machines, the money was stolen.
- ii. The non-transparency of the directory was because of the inability (owing to lack of education about how a cooperative should function) of the member catadores to

- participate in the cooperative and hold the directory accountable. The SANEAR agency could be held responsible for this lack of training of the catadores.
- iii. The structure of the usina de triagem costed a lot to maintain, which was beyond the capacity of the cooperative to pay for. The catadores were never consulted before the huge structure was created. If they had, they would have considered the question of how the cooperative would maintain such a costly structure.
 - iv. The Prefeitura claims to have removed support also because they did not want to support a corrupt directory. Although the changing of administrations might also have something to do with it.
 - v. There are reasons pointed out that blame the culture of the catadores of solely receiving help, and not learning how to govern themselves. Cunha articulates, “The catadores are accustomed to having brought things into their hands, and they expect that for the rest of their lives. They are not used to having to sustain themselves. They also don’t have education (42).” Although, is this expectation on the catadore realistic? Can they really autonomously run the cooperative when they don’t know what it is? Can they maintain machines when the cost is way beyond the earnings of the cooperative? Before we blame the cooperative, we need to equip it.

II. Fernanda said that the current Prefeitura will build a galpao in each zone of Fortaleza. Once cooperatives will be formed, Ronivaldo said that the truck will go to each cooperative or their shed, collect the materials, and then directly sell to the industry. This is a similar idea to that of Ilya Ecologica project of 2000, except that the Prefeitura plans to organize each group into cooperatives.

Why did the Project fail? So far, I understand that the project failed because:

- i. The catadores were not trained to administer the community centres autonomously. They were dependent on the employees of the State Government, who ate up a lot of profit.
- ii. Was there any participation of the catadores in planning of this project? It seems that there was none. If not, then they didn’t have any control or input or

ownership into the project, thereby not being able to ensure the continuity of the project.

An aspect that I learned from these case studies was that the perspective of catadore was not included in the planning stages of either of the projects. Hence, I added the ‘participation of the catadore in any policy or project from its conception and planning stages’ into the list of characteristics to ensure sustainable improvement of the rights. So to the previous list, I add:

- **Participation of the catadore in any project or policy from the conception and planning stages**
 - a. Sense of urgency and sincerity (because of their stake)
 - b. Catadore perspective and information they have
 - c. Being a catadore, will better mobilize other catadores
 - d. Give more control over the planning process
 - e. Create ownership and responsibility in the few catadores that participate in the process, and will be trustworthy sources of confidence for other catadores

How is the Pilot Project contributing to these visions?

As explained in the Definitions of Terms and Project’s section, the infrastructure will be changed from conveyor belts to *silos*, receiving only dry recyclable materials. According to Sergio, the estimated budget for the reformation of infrastructure of the current *usina*, and the infrastructure of selective collection (that also includes 3 electrically automatic *prensas*, 1 truck for doing the collection in the barrios, and 1 balance to weigh materials) donated by Bank of Brasil is 309,000 reais. The Prefeitura is supporting with 80,000 reais, which will help with the social aspect of the Project, i.e. conducting the mobilization of the society to separate materials. This also entails providing Individual Protection Equipment (EPI) for the catadores, capacitation of the catadores for accountancy, sales and purchases of the cooperative, and social relations within the cooperative in the near future. The proposal is already approved according to Sergio (Valiulla, Journal, 21). Fernanda mentioned that currently they are also conducting a *roterizacao*, in which decisions such as how will the collection be done, from what

source for ex. door to door houses or *condominios* (apartments), and then the second step is to sensibelize the schools, churches, businesses and stores, involving the people from these 16 neighborhoods of the metropolitan region of Fortaleza. The collection is expected to start only from September; until then, there will be an educational campaign to sensibelize the population and, fifteen days before the initiation of the collection, they will get the collection out in the media—television and newspapers (Interview).

According to description of the project by the officers, they have accomplished a lot of steps of the Pilot Project. The design of the project suggests that it is setup aiming to accomplish many of the criterias for the sustainable achievement of the work-related rights of the catadores. Comparing to the previous project constructed by the State government, the planned setup consists of dry garbage in *silos*⁷, hence cataodres will collect from dry material improving their working conditions and the price given by the industries, they will be able to pick more quantity due to the *silos*, and the machines will have longer durability. Plus, the selective collection system will determine regular and increasing supply of materials (depending on the conscientization of the society), which improves the cooperative's credibility of supplying a regular quantity and better quality of material to the industry, thereby increasing the price (Sergio Interview).

As mentioned before, the catadores came into the picture *only after* its construction, despite the fact that they were the main players whom the project sought to benefit. In sharp contrast, the Pilot Project team sought expertise from INSEA, who already have experience organizing ASMARE in Belo Horizonte—an ideal association for catadoras, they conducted research (DRPU) in the community, presented the results to the community and designed the project from the results of this research. Since then, according to Fernanda, all members have been participating in all the processes of discussion and formation of the directory and they conducted the characterization of the solid waste to determine the 16 neighborhoods (Interview). Sergio gave added information that the catadores are going to conduct the actual selective collection. They will be provided with a truck and a driver, but they will be in charge of administering everything else (with initial technical help available). Unlike the previous projects, Sergio thinks that they are truly making an effort to include the catadores in the decision-making

⁷ As all technical terms, explained in the Definition of terms section.

process, informing them about all steps in the process on a daily basis, and discussing if any changes need to be made (Valiulla, journal, 21-22). Fernanda concludes that the implantation of selective collection *with* the inclusion of catadores could not be implemented if the catadores had not participated in the process of discussion (9).

According to Fernanda, the team is present in the field consistently providing support to the catadores. In the formation of the new directory, the team is supporting them and being present at every moment—the debate, the election, working toward the “conscientization of the members of the cooperative”, educating them about the role of each member, that they have to verify the candidate that they vote for, and that the cooperative has to work for all members and not just the directory (3).

Based on my observations, I agree that the design of the project addresses their own sustainable vision and that they are consistently present in the field. But the catadores present some concerns about the current activities that present challenges for the Pilot Project.

Challenges

I. Due to past failures, fear that the Pilot Project wouldn't last, and the catadores might not have much control

In their past experience, the catadores, Cesar and Glauciamar have seen a good time, a decent earning, which was taken away, and often the promises are not fulfilled in the first place. In the words of Dona Glauciamar, “During the administration of Jurasi Madalene, the past Prefeito, was signed in the *Camara dos Variadores* along with many partners and many meetings, that the *usina de triagem* in Jangurussu would be increased to 12 conveyor belts and include 1500 catadores. But do you see any conveyor belts now? There aren't. Only five exist (4).” Based on her narration, she knew a lot about the process that was going on. But she still lacked any control over the process. If the project didn't happen, she wasn't able to do anything about it. And, in fact, she wasn't able to do anything when the 12 conveyor belts were not built. Currently, when asked how the catadores are going to administer the cooperative until the conveyor belts get repaired. She said that “12 million reais were donated by Foundation Bank of Brazil to improve the maintenance of the machines and reformation of the shed, education and literacy classes

for the catadores and their children. She said that their responsibility is to constantly pressure and oblige the Prefeitura to fulfill its promises (Interview).” Her words indicate the need to oblige the Prefeitura, but I don’t see any effective ways available to the catadores to do that. Also, the catadoras are not included as a member of the planning team of the Pilot Project. Granted, that the catadores do not have time, but if a catadore is included into the group by vote or by volunteer, and is offered remuneration, it would be more likely that a catadore from Jangurussu would participate. Moreover, along with right of inclusion in the group, that catadore should have the responsibility to educate the other catadores too. For the benefits of my suggestion, look at the criteria that I learnt from analyzing the past projects.

Cesar expresses the same story of distrust, “For many years, the government promised to help and practically the catadore comes to the reunion...will do this, will do that, and the talk never leaves the paper. They never have action. So the catadores have lost their confidence (Interview)” For them, the sustainability of success is a matter of immense significance because their survival is attached to it. The municipal officers can blame the officers of the past who were responsible for the past project and its failure. The catadore’s distrust is constantly voiced by members of the team as a challenge facing the project. (Sergio interview, Journal, 39). But their past lack of control has a lot to do with this distrust. Fernanda knows the consequence of State actions in the past, and the impact—Jucelene could do whatever she wanted as the President of the cooperative (Fernanda Interview). Hence, it is important that the officers pay attention to the history of the people that they are working with. In the DRPU that the team of the Pilot Project conducted, I hope that the technique of DRPU also discussed with catadores the details of how they perceive the history of “help from outsiders.” “Were the promises unfulfilled? Was the situation similar to the new project being planned? This will help them learn from past mistakes, and if catadores are able to have some control over the project through this activity, it will increase their confidence and participation necessary for the project’s success.

II. Lack of expertise

Based on about eleven or twelve catadores that I have spoken to, the formation of the cooperative and their low knowledge about it presents as a big challenge to the Pilot Project. Most of them have said that a cooperative means that everybody is united, and they all earn equally. Others, more politically active catadoras such as Dona Glauciamar and Patricia (the first-runner up candidate) have said that everybody should be responsible for its functioning, not just the directory. When asked how everybody will participate, about three catadores replied that the directory should organize general assemblies to discuss any major decision before they are made. All decisions should be made in the general assembly (Valiulla, Journal, 13-14). Apart from these few people, nobody else had a clear idea as to what kind of decisions a cooperative needs to make—for ex. finding industries that offer a good price, maintaining credible relations with them, maintaining the accounts and keeping them transparent, including all the members in the decision making and execution to maintain their confidence and unity in the cooperative, administer selective collection and educate the population to increase the supply of materials, monitoring the accounts, organizing work schedules for all so that it is fair to everybody, dealing with social conflicts within the group, generating an increasing amount of capital to invest in selective collection and maintenance of the machinery etc, are some of the numerous decisions that the cooperative needs to make. Without such education, I don't see how all members are going to ensure the transparency in the work of the directory, as Kelma suggested (Valiulla, Journal, 23). A different challenge is that catadores themselves have no time or energy to educate themselves, they are barely surviving themselves through their work. Often, they don't think it is worth it to stop working to learn more about cooperative, something that would give benefit only in the long run. There were already enough complaints of "too many meetings" during the week that Insea attended (Valiulla, Journal, 31).

But powerful teaching moments do occur: one such happened in the first meeting with INSEA, when Marislene not only emphasized the qualities of participation, responsibility and decision of all, transparency of work done by the directory, weekly meetings and healthy debates and unity among all, but also helped some members experience how these would play out in the functioning of the cooperative. She asked the

question, “Who has responsibility of the cooperative? What was this responsibility?” it started a heated debate between Dona Glauciamar and Seria where they were shouting at each other, without listening to what the other was saying. Among all of this, Marislene was calmly listening to both sides, and later on, she communicated both of their perspectives, termed them as valid and a healthy debate, where people are able to express their opinion freely. She encouraged such a process happen regularly in a meeting, and then asked the group to decide a meeting time. Liana would be present for all of these meetings (19-20). Such experiential education is effective, and could benefit catadores a lot. I noticed that none of them were sleeping or distracted during the session. Such learning needs to happen more often, with more people.

III. Lack of trust between the catadores

Another reason for the lack of unity among catadores is that “within the cooperative, nobody trusts nobody,” as expressed by Dona Glauciamar. When asked whether she would pass on knowledge that she gains through the course, Lixo e Cidadania, her trip to Minas Gerais etc, her answer was that she “would give an interview to me, an outsider, to Prefeitura or to any other organization, but not try to educate or speak to a catadore within the cooperative. Because people think that you don’t know anything (Interview).” When she makes effort to express her opinions to Serea, the current President, claims to have sole authority, and she and others feel discriminated (Interview). Hence she prefers to let the directory take the initiative to call a General Assembly, and invite her to speak. She does not think that, being a member, she has the right to call on a General Assembly. Another lady catadora also felt timid to speak up her opinion, in case people would disagree. Conflicts for power and conflicts of opinion between different groups of catadores is omnipresent in the dynamics of the group, indicated by the immense amount of cynical gossip about the behavior of colleague catadores (Valiulla, Journal, 12-15, 41-2). Hence, owing to the lack of education about how each member should participate and administer in a cooperative plus the distrust between members causes the directory to have a lot of responsibility. This is not ideal, because as we have learned from SANEAR project and Jucelene’s robbery, that power will increase with the increase in responsibility.

The team has been working hard to be present at all times, but the enormity of the challenge is too much to be tackled immediately. I expressed my concern of the lack of education to Fabiana, and she said that it is extremely difficult and a slow process (Valiulla, Journal, 42). As outlined before, these challenges have deep structural roots and are caused by years of catadore's experience with no education and no political participation or control over projects that affect their own lives. Hence, the challenge will be overcome neither easily nor quickly. On the other hand, no matter how hard forming a cooperative is, the reality is that unity and collaborative work is the only long-term solution that catadores can fend for themselves. Moreover, the support they have from partners is for a limited time period, and so they will have to make the journey to self-governance soon before their support leaves them. Probably, once each catadore realizes this, they will sense more responsibility and will have a reason to unite and work together. Another aspect is that each member needs to realize that the directory has many responsibilities, and that they don't just need monitoring but collaborative, involved support too. It is important that the team explains the concrete responsibilities that the cooperative has to carry out and suggest a plan to distribute responsibilities among the members, because at present it is burdened solely by the directory. The urgency of turning autonomous and understanding of the various challenges facing the cooperative will help them forget their differences and focus their efforts on a common goal of survival.

The officers expressed challenges to the current activities that were huge structural challenges. The solutions are way beyond the territory of the project in hand. **I. Financial constraints** is one of the constraints that keeps coming up. When asked what challenges Sergio confronts in the Pilot Project currently, he spoke about the challenges of the past. He admitted that "until the end of 2004, EMLURB was cutting away a lot of its functions because the Prefeitura (the past administration) reduced the funding allocated to it. Hence, EMLURB was left without a budget plan for investing into the maintenance of the equipments of the aterro of Jangurussu, along with many other function within the municipality of Fortaleza. They left administration generating a situation such that people (probably, within the administration) felt impotent to solve the problems. Because most problems would be resolved only with the help of financial

resources. And EMLURB didn't have them (Interview).” When asked Fernanda about the possibility for expanding the course, Lixo e Cidadania, to more catadores right now, she firmly said no, because of lack of finances. She said that, “49% of the municipal taxes go into salaries of its officers, and only 51% remains to address all the problems in the city of Fortaleza, among which one of them is the question of catadore (Interview).” There are many other issues, which competes with this one, for financing, which is decided not in the Secretary of Finance and Planning.

II. Bureaucracy delaying any sort of public effort was another challenge voiced by different stakeholders. Dona Glauciamar complained that after she went and spoke to the director, Sergio, he called, met a company, and signed a contract and many more difficulties before any company comes to repair the machines (Interview). Just the fact that she knows about these difficulties, which generally is a perspective of officers is encouraging and indicates communicated that has happened between Glauciamar and Sergio. This implies that probably there was an open communication of challenges between Sergio and Dona Glauciamar. This should happen more often, which will improve the relations of trust between Prefeitura and Cooselc, working together as a team. Marislene discouragingly admitted the delays caused in contracting a company to reform the infrastructure owing to bureaucracy involved in the process. Sergio, being the executor honestly explained that “within public service, there is the question of all the resources and have to take three research proposals of prices, create a quotation, analyze the various proposals, if the value was more than desired, need to look at each quotation, all these things are something that demand time and wont happen overnight. Sometimes, the process delays almost three months, meanwhile you are stuck with the conveyor belts stalled (6).” He sincerely tries to explain that bureaucracy is a challenge.

Lack of education of the catadores about cooperatives or associations, lack of trust among catadores of COOSEL, financial constraints, bureaucracy, loss of catadore trust due to constant failure of projects, and lack of control, input, decision making power and ownership of the projects since the planning stage are major challenges that face the Pilot Project. Despite their enormity, are they trying to fight with these structural challenges? Or are they finding alternate ways to deal with these challenges? Let us move

to their future visions and expectations of different entities to understand how they plan deal with these challenges.

Expectations for the future: Viable or not

I checked whether an expectation is viable or not viable based on four criteria. First, if the two players had the same goal in mind and similar alternative ways to achieve that goal, then execution was just a matter of communication of these future plans, and collaborative action. For example, both Fernanda and Cesar said that the course, *Lixo e Cidadania*, will be and should be extended respectively. The only difference is that Cesar, as a catadore, senses the urgent need of the course for many other catadores as soon as possible. According to Fernanda, extending the course is not possible owing to financial constraints. But nothing prevents an alternative solution. Both Cesar and Fernanda also point out the catadores already politically conscientized through Forum, visits to other cities, such courses and plenary of the catadores should organize talks for other catadores to pass on that knowledge and multiply the education despite lesser resources. They would probably be able to convince more catadores to participate too. This is just the beginning of an idea; catadores and municipal officers can develop this idea together to bring it into action. The catadores who teach could be given a small salary, and the resource materials for example, CD, panels, something about the environment, expertise from the Forum and a successful catadore organization as Cesar articulated (Cesar, Interview). Another example is extending the infrastructure for selective collection, storage space and truck to catadore groups of the centre and the other neighborhoods, especially if the Jangurussu project works—a vision voiced by Cesar, Sergio and Fernanda. This is another reason to include politically-conscious catadores into any discussion of a new selective collection implant, because they share the same vision, and would be able to contribute new information, better mobilize other catadores and get greater ownership on behalf of the catadores.

Second, when one player truly doesn't have access to a service, and they identify that the other person has an alternative solution and expect assistance from them; it is possible that the expectation would work. The previous case where the Prefeitura truly cannot increase the number of classes owing to financial constraints, they recognize one

of the current catadore-student as an alternative asset that can educate others, where costs would be low too. For example, when Cesar expects that the Prefeitura should get the catadores and their situation out in the media or that the Prefeitura should get access to private events for catadores to collect recyclable materials after the event, he truly does not have access to these things. On the other hand, it is easier for the government as a public power to negotiate these facilities on behalf of the catadore. Again, this is a topic that a couple of catadores and officers can discuss and negotiate an arrangement. This would be a great opportunity to include private companies too—the last point in the sustainable vision. In this context, Fernanda had an idea of ‘adopt a catadore’ or ‘adopt a catadore organization’ where a private entity would donate all their deposit to this specific catadore organization. Of course, one would have to either include all catadores in the program or be cautious not to marginalize those that are not in the program.

The third type of expectation is when one player is willing to do one’s part and is now expecting help from the other player; this expectation could be fulfilled because one’s initiative stimulates that of the other. For example, Glauciamar, Cesar, Fernanda and Sergio, all agree that the cooperative after a point should be autonomous, but each person’s perspective as to what needs to be provided and who will provide it to achieve this goal is often different. Fernanda did not want to support each cooperative or association with initial capital because she thinks that the catadores can arrange it for themselves, and should learn through their own mistakes and experiences. She wants the catadores to organize themselves into legal organizations and self-determine the supply and sales of the recyclable materials that they collect (Fernanda, 13). She said that the government is a partner, present with resources, but then after the initial help, the catadores need to *slowly* transitioning into being able to help themselves. Cesar suggests that if an association receives the basic infrastructure such as a shed, truck to transport material to the industry, a balance and a prensa, the association can manage itself. According to Sergio, once the catadores of Cooselc are able to earn 75% of the minimum salary they should begin paying 10% of the maintenance costs of the machines. This expectation would likely realize into reality if the Prefeitura constantly reassesses what exactly the catadores *can* or *cannot* achieve. If done honestly, and in communication with catadores, as Sergio said, it will be a tactic to create responsibility and ownership within

catadores of the machines they use and their own cooperative. Although, if the assessment of what catadores can achieve is wrong, as it was when the past Prefeitura stopped supporting the maintenance of the machines thinking that it is the cooperative's responsibility, the catadores will again be abandoned instead of turning into owners of their project. To prevent such wrong assessment, the Prefeitura needs to continue its communication with catadores about this issue and consistent presence in the field. Another example is that Cesar thinks that more catadores should participate in meetings such as the plenary. But because the plenary is conducted in the centre, the ticket fare and the time commitment discourages a lot of catadores to join. According to him, plenary should be organized in each barrio, and he would be willing to organize or help out. But again he would need technical expertise, resources, financial remuneration for his time etc, another form of multiplier. Considering the immense need for education of the catadores, because that is what is needed for organization of the catadores into the cooperatives and associations, such collaborations would be extremely useful.

Now, I move onto expectations that are non-viable. It is when one player expects from another, but fails to contribute their own participation. One example is when Dona Glauciamar put complete responsibility for earning the capital, holding Prefeitura accountable, uniting the catadoras, despite having the consciousness that these are very challenging goals and would be too much responsibility on the shoulders of the directory. For the same reason, she does not want to assume a role in the directory, but still expects as a member. Her idea for member participation is just to express opinion and monitor the directory, but not help in tougher goals such as education and increase in participation of the members. When one does not want to take initiative, and expects others to, it won't work because lack of initiative will stimulate the same too.

A different case of a non-viable expectation is when an expectation just cannot be fulfilled because there are huge structural barriers preventing it to be realized in the short-term. For example, when I say that the participation of catadores is too little in COOSEL, the team should try to increase it; I am expecting huge structural changes overnight. As we have understood the many different challenges that hinder collaboration between the catadores in COOSEL, we understand that long term education, trust

building and collaboratively lived experience could be a possible solution, which cannot be achieved with the blink of an eye.

Conclusion

I found that the municipal officers had much more intimate and honest communication with the catadores than I had expected. This is reflected in the convergence of most of their sustainable vision for the work-related rights of the catadores. The main divergences of opinion for a sustainable vision were:

- Ability and power of the catadores to hold accountable, any organization (especially the Prefeitura) who promises to benefit them.
- Catadores want to see results immediately, while the government is planning for the long term.
- The lack of knowledge or participation about policy discussions.
- The lack of control, input, decision making power and ownership of the projects since the planning stage in the Pilot Project of Jangurussu or any other project in the future⁸.

These differences reflected the institutional power differences between the two players. The team, including the Prefeitura, is the creator with total control of the project and policy discussions, and the catadores of Cooselc are the benefitors of the project and potential policy but have almost no control. The catadores need the efficacy and success of the project much more than the Prefeitura. The catadores need immediate results for their survival, while the Prefeitura's survival is not at stake due to these projects. Such differences in visions determine the challenges that are present in the current times. For example, there still exists distrust and disbelief among catadores about the good intentions of the Pilot Project (current challenge) *because* catadores do not have enough control over the project and cannot hold the government accountable to its completion (different vision of the catadore not shared by the Prefeitura). The catadores do not see the importance of meetings, and unity and collaboration within cooperative for the long

⁸ This was not specifically pointed out by catadores, but is my conclusion from analyzing past projects.

term benefit (challenge) *because* they want and *need* immediate results more urgently (different vision of the catadore not shared by the Prefeitura). If these different visions can be brought into open dialogue with the catadoras, it will open new doorways and throw light on why challenges exist. Why after such honest demonstration of the project, there still isn't wholehearted participation? Why aren't catadores excited about working together for the betterment of the cooperative? Basically, it is important to ask the question, why do the challenges exist?

Nevertheless, the work of the Prefeitura has been much more promising than the past projects. It has corrected or aims to correct a lot of past mistakes. There are systemic challenges such as lack of policy, financial constraints and bureaucratic delays that are much bigger than scale of this project. But all of these aforementioned challenges present hidden opportunities to find more sustainable alternatives. For example, representatives of both players identified a need to equip every catadore student not only with the skills of organizing, for example, but also the skills of being a teacher, a multiplier of understanding to other catadoras. This was an alternative solution to the challenge of financial constraints according to the Prefeitura. But in the long run, it would prepare the catadoras into administering their own education. We are lucky that the two players think the same despite having a one-sided perspective; imagine what innovative ideas could be generated if the two of them communicate the challenges and work together to find alternate pathways. For example, how can catadoras have more control, input, decision making power and ownership of the projects since the planning stage in the Pilot Project of Jangurussu?

Another challenge is that catadores are not taking initiative to come to meetings and collaborate because they are too preoccupied with fulfilling their immediate needs right now, ensuring their survival. At the same time, they understand the importance of long-term benefit of a united and autonomous cooperative. Probably that is why they attribute all responsibilities to the directory so that they have time to earn enough to survive. They don't have any expectations on themselves for the administration of the cooperative, probably because they *cannot* afford to spend valuable time of *cascering* into doing administration work. In this case, a possible solution might be to find a way to alleviate their basic, immediate needs in some way so that they *can* focus on longer term

gains. This solution will again be found in the dialogue between the two players in order to understand why the catadores don't want to attend meetings or learn how to work collaboratively.

Challenges presented by officers such as bureaucracy or policy discussion delays are huge systemic loopholes. These are structural challenges that are not caused by negativity in the relationship between the catadores and the Prefeitura. Understanding their causes (which I do not) would probably help one empathize with an organ, not just governmental, who sincerely intends to work for the public good, but cannot. Although, this understanding might also highlight alternative paths to solve the problem; the challenge is not unsurpassable. For example, both Sergio and Fernanda identified genuine financial constraints beyond their control. But Ronivaldo, quickly was able to envision other alternatives to get financial help—international organizations, federal government and private companies. Thus, current challenges, if looked at as opportunities for improving one's own work in the future as opposed to impassable roads, will show greater possibility for the Prefeitura and the catadores to achieve their vision. Ultimately, in the future, how much initiative each player is willing to take in collaboration with other partners to mitigate challenges, will determine the viability of heading one step closer to their sustainable vision each time.

Postscript: Prefeitura's role in the larger context of all catadoras in Fortaleza

The Prefeitura is making great efforts, but only within this one Pilot Project. If looked in context of the enormity of the task—including all catadores in Fortaleza, the Prefeitura is not doing enough. In order to problematize this current reality, I want to ask some critical questions to the Prefeitura in terms of including all the catadores, which I would have pursued if time permitted:

1. Why isn't the Prefeitura working as hard on the municipal level policy as it is on the Jangurussu Pilot Project?
2. Why did Prefeitura choose Jangurussu as the first community? Why build silos for Jangurussu and give only a shed to other groups?
3. What will they do to guarantee the continuation of the Pilot Project when this administration leaves? If the answer is policy, then the current administration has

- only two years of deadline before the next Prefeitura election to get a policy passed.
4. How is this Jangurussu selective collection system going to impact the catadores of the other regions, for example, of the center?

Indications for Further Research

This research has been a valuable exercise to go through for me to understand the real challenges that a project faces for success. It would be a valuable feedback process for the catadores and Prefeitura as the catadores proceed with their movement, if this research is continued with other current activities of the government. The course, Lixo e Cidadania, and GT created by Prefeitura would be two possible projects. Also, I did not address policy and relations with recycling industries at all in this paper since I could not obtain enough information on these topics. Those would be two separate ISPs, I think. The questions that I have asked above with the goal of achieving rights for all catadores could be another direction pursued. If I had more time, I would have included many more NGO perspectives because they are experts and unlike the Prefeitura, have no political affiliation. Thus they would provide more critical perspectives about reality to compare and verify the perspectives of the municipal officers. I would also be interested in tracing the question, “why the challenges such as bureaucracy and financial constraints exist?” to higher levels of authority within the government to understand the potential for mitigating these challenges. This would also help me understand the relations between higher level and lower level of authority within the government.

Appendix

My objective was to understand the findings of such a research in a setting of a so-called developing country, with more institutional problems and fewer institutionalized solutions than a so-called developed country. This research could have been done in the US, but it wouldn't have met my objectives. The immense structural challenges such as bureaucracy, corruption, urgent problems of an enormous scale, but little financial and infrastructural resources, and technical expertise are unique to a country, less powerful politically and economically in the current world order. In the US,

the challenges would have been smaller, and there would exist institutionalized ways of dealing with them.

I learn better if I experience, and then theorize based on my experiences. Hence, this was a perfect avenue for me to build my understanding. Almost all my data from the methodology section onwards is primary. I used three criterias to select from the enormous amounts of data I had: 1. The data fit within the structure of my paper 2. I chose the topic—Pilot Project—on which I had the most data, hence this was a criteria for into choosing other data 3. Multiple perspectives on one specific issue.

The process of creating my problem statement and the Projeto Comunitario helped me immensely to prepare for my ISP. I benefited from my problem statement exercise only because I was in my field, Fortaleza, when I was creating it. Hence I could talk to some of my informants during the planning process. Disciplined recording of data, asking good and thorough follow-up questions, synthesizing all the data into the final paper, and struggles with portuuese were some of the difficulties. I normally dealt with them to an extent as time went by. I could have been slightly more disciplined and concise in my recoding. Synthesis just required more time.

My original topic did not change, but it narrowed from two or three activities of Prefeitura, to just the Pilot Project, which my paper is about. Being in Fortaleza helped a lot in making contacts for my ISP. I got most of my secondary from my advisor and other informants. My method was basically understanding the vision of two sides, and looking at the current reality through their visions. I used this method to be just to their work, if I am trying to evaluate their actions, it would be fair to evaluate them with their own criteria. My advisor was wonderful and always available. In the end, she corrected my interview transcripts and send me pictures for my presentation.

The hypothesis, that often the municipal government efforts fail because they come across structural problems that are way beyond the scope of immediate problems to solve, held true. The entire research that I did with the Course, Lixo e Cidadania, I did not use because it was just too much information to use. Instead of dead ends, I always found more things that I could research than I had time for.

The ISP just affirmed something that I already knew—the Northeast Brazillians are very friendly and helpful. The amount of attention that all my informants gave me

was priceless. Another thing that I didn't know about before was that just like India, when a Brazilian says 10.00 am, it means 11 or 11.30 am. Principal lessons: 1. Doing research without personal follow up action is not rewarding enough. 2. Being critical of actions is important, but I need to be realistic too, that within the constraints present are they doing a good job? 3. In the future, I will be more do a few days of fieldwork followed by a few days of analysis to give be better orientation 4. I will be more concise in recording observations.

Recommendations would be doing secondary reading before the project and doing analysis and writing between field work, which will give better orientation for the further steps in research. Also some national-level picture is important as far as the movement of catadores is considered, which I lack. I wouldn't do this same project again because I have understood what I wanted to understand about the government actions and sustainability. The rest of knowledge can come only with my action, not research.

Weakness of my paper:

I have not consulted with Caritas, as the organizer of the Forum, who seem to have the most experience looking at the big picture of the catadores in Fortaleza. They are involved since 2000. I have the perspective of Dona Nete, director of Socrelp, was founded in 1994. But she is looking at it from the Socrelp perspective. I feel that the perspective of Caritas as an objective body, who has a broad perspective, more knowledge on the topic than anybody else.

Considering the complexity of how history is recollected, and how it is dependent upon the narrator's political interest and point of view, I still feel that a lot of dates and events could be added, supported or contested, and I could have a lot more viewpoints on the same events.

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