

# Good practice Report Collectors of Recyclable Material

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## Premises

### 0.1) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the Country

Brazil is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest country worldwide, both in inhabitants – the last census in 2010 reported 190.7 million inhabitants (IBGE 2013; data for 2009) – and in surface area – its 8.5 million km<sup>2</sup> form nearly double the size of the EU 28 member state's 4.4 million km<sup>2</sup>. It is politically organized as a presidentialist federative republic, which consists of municipalities, states and the federal government. The president who is elected in a multi-party system is head of state and chief of the executive branch, where power is assigned to distinct and independent bodies that are bound to the constitution. The president is able to appoint and dismiss members of his cabinet, which is composed of Ministers of state and senior advisors (*secretários*). Legislative power lies mainly with the bicameral national congress that consists of the federal senate (composed equally by representatives of each state and the federal district) and the chamber of deputies (where seats are distributed proportionally to each state's population). Beside national legislation, the 27 Brazilian states and the 5,570 municipalities have their own legislature. Brazil is a multi-ethnic country, with 48.2% of the population registered as white (*branca*), 6.9% as black (*preta*), 44.2% as coloured (*parda*) and 0.7% as yellow or indigenous (*amarela ou indígena*) in 2009 (IBGE 2013).<sup>1</sup> Brazil has ranked among the most unequal countries worldwide for many years, but recently reported a considerable decline of its Gini coefficient from 0.596 in 2001 to 0.53 in 2012, while the poverty rate dropped from 35.09% to 15.03% during the same period (IPEA 2015).

Regarding its economic situation, the country has historically been characterized by “ups” and “downs” (cf. Graph 1). Years of high growth rates have shortly afterwards been followed by crises and sharp economic declines. Whereas the debt-crisis-ridden 1980s are considered as a “lost decade”, growth returned in the 1990s, but was again brutally interrupted by economic crises. In 1998/99, Brazil suffered from a rather severe financial crisis in the aftermath of the Asian and Russian crises (Singer 1999). In 2000 growth returned again, but at modest rates in international comparison, with another less severe crisis between 2001 and 2003. Between 2004 and 2008 growth retained pace, while the first economic downturn (-0.6% GDP-growth) in 2009 was rather low in international comparison. 2010 was marked by a remarkable comeback of growth, which slowed down again in the subsequent years (IPEA 2015).

The social situation in Brazil is correlating with the economic situation up to a large extent. Nevertheless, the most important problems varied over time. The 1980s can be characterized by a double movement: On the one hand, the international debt crisis hit Brazil. The economic downturn in the beginning of the 1980s was accompanied by a sharp rise of inflation rates, which rose from 99% in 1980 to 1973% in 1989. Such high rates of hyper-inflation had the most detrimental impact on the poor, who were not able to defend themselves, due to their exclusion from banking. The economic downturn in the beginning and the end of the 1980s was detrimental to the average wage rates, which recovered during the mid-1980s to fall again by the end of the decade.

On the other hand, the 1980s were politically marked by a process of democratization, as social movements were protesting against the military dictatorship. Interlinked with a strong and combative trade union movement, their fight for democracy turned out to be successful, and democracy was gradually installed throughout the 1980s, with the first direct presidential elections in 1989 and the participatory drafting of a new constitution, which has been adopted in 1988 (Kinzo 2001). This second movement during the 1980s is of particular importance for the further development considering the Social and Solidarity-based Economy (SSE), as the fight for democracy has been linked to demands for social justice and the inclusion of the hitherto excluded people (Dagnino 1994).

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<sup>1</sup> The Brazilian census relies on the self-declaration of skin-color or race (*cor ou raça*). Sometimes, black and coloured are summarized as Afro-Brazilian. The indigenous population is summed up with the population of Asian descent for the census and remains a minority. Most race-related statistics mainly distinguish between whites and Afro-Brazilians.

The 1990s were marked by the double movement of the consolidation of democracy, which included the implementation of social reforms laid out in the constitution of 1988, and the implementation of neoliberal reforms – particularly during the presidencies of Collor (1990 until his impeachment due to corruption charges in 1992) and Cardoso (1995-2002). During the presidency of Cardoso, the hyper-inflation of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s has been defeated, but at the high cost of rising unemployment: between 1992 and 1999 the unemployment rate rose from 7.2% to 10.4% (IPEA 2015). The Brazilian unemployment rate does not fully account for the employment situation, as many people are forced to work in the informal sector, where workers' rights are not in effect and payment is much lower than in the formal sector. By 1992, the majority of Brazilian workers were already working informally, as the informal sector comprised of 54.3% of the Brazilian workforce. Until 1999, the informal sector grew to represent 56.2% of the Brazilian workers (IPEA 2015). Therefore, the 1990s have been described as marked by a crisis of unemployment by interviewed experts (Singer, Sanchez, Leite).

In the context of rising unemployment during the 1990s, SSE began to emerge as a possible solution. Already being promoted by Christian NGOs, such as Caritas, it also began to be seen as a viable strategy by progressive politicians, most notably the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT). During these times, the most prominent examples were bankrupt companies, taken over by their workers, but other initiatives also began to develop (Singer and Souza 2000).

The 2000s were marked by the recuperation of economic growth, particularly from 2005 onwards. Politically, the election of the PT candidate Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) for president also led to more favourable conditions, which will be described in the following sub-sections.

In general, many social indicators improved from the 1990s onwards: Illiteracy (for persons older than 15 years) dropped from 23.3% in 1982 to 17.2% in 1992, 11.9% in 2002 to 8.7% in 2012. The most recent data of 2013 reported the illiteracy rate at 8.5% (IPEA 2015). Other basic social indicators related to education and health also improved, leading to a rise of the Brazilian Human Development index from 0.545 in 1980 to 0.612 in 1990, 0.682 in 2000, 0.705 in 2005, 0.739 in 2010 and 0.744 in 2013 (UNDP 2015). Employment-related indicators also improved during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the unemployment dropping from 10.1% in 2001 to 6.7% in 2012 and the percentage of the informal sector dropping from 58.4% in 2001 to 46.3% in 2012. These improvements have been accompanied by a declining rate of income inequalities, expressed by the drop of the Gini coefficient from 0.596 in 2001 to 0.527 in 2013 (IPEA 2015).

The main drivers for the recent improvements have been identified as the effects of the implementation of the contribution of 1988 on social policies: Social spending increased from 13.3% of GDP in 1985 to 19% of GDP in 1990 and continued to rise to 25.2% in 2010 (Leubolt 2015). In the more recent years, the minimum wage has been risen from 415.94 R\$ (approx. 150 Euros) in January 2003 to 834,14 R\$ (approx. 300 Euros) in January 2015 in real-wage-terms (IPEA 2015). Average wages also rose from 1.029,59 R\$ (approx. 360 Euros) in 2003 to 1.624,11 R\$ (approx. 600 Euros) in 2013 (ibid.).

## 0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory

São Paulo is the Brazilian state with the highest number of inhabitants, with 41.26 million inhabitants in 2010 (IPEA 2015), more than a fifth of the Brazilian population lived in the state of São Paulo. Its capital city, also named São Paulo, hosted 11.52 million inhabitants – approximately 6% of the total Brazilian population. The state of São Paulo is considered to be the economic centre of Brazil, with a total GDP of 1.25 billion R\$ in 2010, it accounted for 33% of the total Brazilian GDP (IPEA 2015). GDP per capita in the state of São Paulo for 2010 was 30,240 R\$, more than 150% of the Brazilian GDP per capita of 19,770 R\$ (ibid.). The city of São Paulo is the financial centre of the country. Besides the enormous wealth accumulated in the city, it is also representing the Brazilian social and economic inequalities (Fix 2007).

Social indicators for the state of São Paulo tend to be better than for the whole country: Illiteracy concerned 3.8% of the population (compared to 8.7% in Brazil). The employment situation is also more

positive in São Paulo than the average Brazilian situation. The average unemployment rate for 2012 for the metropolitan region of São Paulo was 6.1% (own calculation, based on IPEA 2015), slightly lower than the 6.5% reported for Brazil. The average salary is considerably higher than in the country as a whole, in 2013 the annual average salary was R\$ 2.395,60 (about 800 Euros), about 150% of the national average of R\$ 1.624,11 (own calculations, based on IPEA 2015). São Paulo's Gini coefficient is slightly lower than the national Gini, with a similar trajectory – it lowered from 0.553 in 2001 to 0.494 in 2013 (IPEA 2015).

In general, São Paulo – as the economic centre of the country – provides more development opportunities than other regions in Brazil. Nevertheless, inequalities, poverty and social exclusion are also serious problems in the territory.

### 0.3) Describe the Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations' role in this context

The Social and Solidarity-based Economy (SSE) began to emerge during the 1980s, as a rather marginal phenomenon, stipulated by social organizations of the Catholic church – mostly organized by Caritas. It was treated as a possible way to promote employment, combining collective organization with ways of promoting employment opportunities (Singer 2002).

During the 1990s, the rising rates of unemployment began to be seen as a central problem of Brazilian development. In search for a response to this problem, SSE began to gain prominence, especially among the politically more progressive sectors of society. After the breakdown of actually existing socialism, the search for new and democratic ways of promoting a social alternative paved the way to think about SSE. As mentioned by Paul Singer in the interview, SSE has been accepted as a central strategy of the Workers' Party (PT) to promote economic development and to fight unemployment in the beginning of the 1990s. Therefore, the PT began to promote SSE initiatives. As the PT's candidates won the first important elections on the municipal scale – most notably in the cities of Porto Alegre and São Paulo, which were governed from 1989 until 1992<sup>2</sup> by mayors from PT – some SSE initiatives began to be supported, albeit not on a large scale (more in the following sub-section). The main drive towards SSE began in the mid-1990s. An article written by Paul Singer (Singer 1996), during the campaign of the PT candidate Luiza Erundina for mayor in São Paulo in 1996 first used the term '*economia solidária*' and generated debate in Brazil (as laid out in the interviews by Singer and Sanchez).

The guiding principle of the Brazilian solidarity-based economy has been the collective self-organization of workers with the explicit requirement of democratic decision making. All involved workers have an equal vote in the decision making process and salaries ought to be less stratified than in conventional capitalist enterprises. I.e., the main difference of solidarity-based enterprises, compared to their conventional counterparts, is that they are owned by their workers. Therefore, the differentiation between workers and owners ceases to exist, as the workers collectively own their company (Singer 2002).

As stated by Sanchez in the interview, during the 1990s, the most important expression of SSE in Brazil were factories taken over by the workers (*empresas recuperadas*) – reflecting the centrality of the fight against unemployment. During the 2000s, they began to disappear politically and also to shrink in numbers. As Leite stated in the interview, these experiences were important in the fight against unemployment. Nevertheless, many of them have not been organized in practice according to the principles of SSE. As the workers are considered to be associates, workers' rights are not applied, while at the same time, democratic decision making and egalitarian wage structures are also not applied. Thereby these practices rather contributed to the precarization and deterioration of labour conditions (Leite et al. 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> Porto Alegre was the city with the longest history of PT governments, being governed from 1989 until 2004 by the PT (Leubolt et al. 2008), whereas São Paulo was governed by PT only between 1989 and 1992 (mayor: Erundina), from 2001 until 2004 (Suplicy), and from 2013 until 2016 (Haddad).

During the 2000s, the factories taken over by the workers therefore gave way to new expressions of SSE. In general, the current panorama of SSE initiatives is very broad. As Sanchez reported in the interview, there was an important transformation compared to the 1990s. While the plurality was already quite big at that time, the centre of attention was production. During the 2000s, SSE got closer to environmental movements and the concepts of *Buen Vivir* and *Vivir Bien*, promoted by the indigenous movements and governments of Bolivia and Ecuador.

The mapping carried out by the sub-ministry for SSE (cf. Gaiger et al. 2014; more below), reported a total of 33,518 SSE enterprises in Brazil between the years of 2004 and 2013 (SENAES 2013). This number is believed to be considerably lower than the exact number of enterprises, as some of the small enterprises might not have been registered (ibid.). There are different forms of organization of these enterprises: 8.8% are organized as cooperatives, 30.5% as informal groups, and 60% as associations (ibid.). The majority of SSE enterprises (40.8%) is situated in Brazil's poorest region, the northeast, while 16.4% are situated in the Southeast – São Paulo's region (ibid.). In Brazil, 54.8% of SSE enterprises are situated in rural regions, 34.8% in cities, and 10.4% in mixed regions, while in the southeast, the relation is different, as only 29.7% are situated in rural regions and 61% are situated in urban regions and 9.3 in mixed regions (ibid.). The majority of Brazilian SSE enterprises (47%) are working in the sector of familiar agriculture, 14% are beneficiaries of agrarian reform, 12% are working in the sector of handicraft, 6% are other autonomous workers, 5% are collectors of recyclable material, 3% are cooperatives of people with advanced educational background, and 3% are fishermen (SENAES 2014).<sup>3</sup>

In a nutshell, the factories taken over by the workers gave way to new expressions of SSE during the 2000s. The most important expression was familiar agriculture in the countryside, where the majority of SSE initiatives is situated. As Sanchez stated in the interview, the collectors of recyclable material became the most important expression of SSE in the cities. According to Sanchez, the collectors organize themselves according the principles of SSE, many of them do not use the term 'Solidarity Based Economy', as they seem to have gained political strength going beyond the movement of SSE.

Considering the social background, 47% of people engaged in SSE did not complete basic education, 13% did only complete basic education, 24% completed high school (*ensino médio completo*), and 7% had university degrees (SENAES 2014). This educational background is below the Brazilian average. The medium wage from SSE activities was also below the Brazilian average, with R\$ 1,003,07 (approx. 380 Euros; compared to the Brazilian average wage of R\$ 1,210.32 for 2007, the year of the mapping process). The lowest monthly wages are obtained by the collectors of recyclable material (416.76 on average), while the average wage in familiar agriculture was R\$ 1,212.72. Handicraft was remunerated with R\$ 516.17 on average (SENAES 2014).<sup>4</sup> It is important to note, that only 29% of people working in SSE had their prime source of income in SSE, while for 33% it was complimentary income and for 35%, their income did not depend on SSE. As Leite mentioned in the interview, this latter group especially concerns the handicraft sector, where often women work, while their husbands are responsible for the main source of household income.

#### 0.4) Describe eventual public/legislative initiatives to support/which affect those sectors

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<sup>3</sup> 7% did not declare their activities and another 3% carried out different activities from the ones being listed (SENAES 2014).

<sup>4</sup> These numbers concern the SSE initiatives, where products are commercialized by the SSE enterprises themselves – the largest group in SSE (47%). 17% of SSE initiatives rather receive monthly salaries. In this group, the relations are different, as the collectors of recyclable material receive R\$ 673.95 and familiar agriculture leads to an average salary of R\$ 839.50 (SENAES 2014).

As stated above, SSE mainly concerns people considered as poor. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise, that the mapping process revealed the lack of income as the major problem of the Brazilian SSE sector (stated by 74 % of the respondents of the government's questionnaire, cf. SENAES 2013). Despite this fact, it has also been recognized (Santos 2002) that collective organization in SSE initiatives contributed to better possibilities to generate income. Nevertheless, the lack of capital (in a thorough sense, including social, cultural and financial capital; cf. Bourdieu 1984) is an important obstacle for many SSE initiatives.

Therefore, many initiatives have been developed in close cooperation with NGOs and (from the 1990s onwards) the public sector. In Brazil, this movement has been described as the proliferation and institutionalization of 'citizenship' (Dagnino 2002b), understood in a broad sense as the promotion of social justice with the participation of the hitherto excluded. Despite of a 'perverse confluence' (Dagnino 2002a, 288) of these efforts with neoliberal reforms, limiting material improvements of the poor, many efforts have been started during the 1990s to assist the development of the poor, including the SSE sector.

The most important political party to implement such efforts has been the Workers' Party (PT). During the 1990s, this mainly concerned local governments (Bittar 1992; Magalhães et al. 2002). Considering the SSE sectors, such efforts could include the provision of adequate space for work, or subsidies.

Another important problem of SSE initiatives is the lack of education of the associated workers. As managing a company requires considerable knowledge about legal aspects and the specific sectoral market structure, the lack of education results in difficulties to survive the competition with conventional firms. From the late 1990s onwards, Brazilian universities began to engage in capacity building for cooperatives. So-called 'Technological Incubators of Popular Cooperatives' (*Incubadoras Tecnológicas de Cooperativas Populares* – ITCPs) were founded as university centres where research and teaching staff together with students began to engage in this form of 'social consulting' (Dubeux 2013; Fernandes et al. 2013). Other organizations have also been active in such 'social consulting' activities. Religious entities and NGOs have been engaged for a long time in empowerment programs for civil society organizations (Simões 2008). Working as 'intermediaries', they assist in the political education and in dealing with public entities, especially when it comes to legal claims, which are difficult to handle for social movements of the poor.

An important landmark considering government support was the election of Lula as national president in 2002. Already in 2003, the first year of his government, a new sub-ministry of solidarity-based economy (*Secretaria Nacional de Economia Soliária* – SENAES) has been created. Headed by the renowned intellectual Paul Singer, SENAES always worked with a considerable small budget. Therefore the efforts were mostly on coordinating government action, related to legal obstacles, such as the availability of credit. When the government began its anti-poverty program 'Brazil without Misery' in 2011 (already under Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff), some of the resources to fight poverty have been channelled into the SSE sector, as the director of research of SENAES, Valmor Schiochet stated in an interview (2014). The main beneficiaries of the new programme were to be found in familiar agriculture. The resources of 'Brazil without Misery' have mainly been used to assist poor agricultural workers to form SSE initiatives, in order to facilitate 'productive inclusion'.

Another important part of the efforts of SENAES concerned networking among SSE initiatives. Similar to many other policy fields in Brazil (Romão 2014), national fora of participation have been set up for SSE. Starting with meetings on the local level, a process of participation on the regional level and beyond has been managed by the government. After the preparatory phases, the final national meeting unites the SSE movements and enables them to participate in policy making.



## Description of the SSE Good practice

### 1.1) Description of the SSE Good practice

Coopamare (Cooperativa dos Catadores Autônomos de Papel, Aparas e Materiais Reaproveitáveis); organized in the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis – MNCR); Location: São Paulo, SP, Brazil, Sector: Collection and First Processing of Recyclable Material.

Coopamare is one of the pioneer cooperative for collectors of recyclable material in Brazil.<sup>5</sup> As Ferreira, Grimberg and Silva stated in the interviews, its foundation in 1989 was linked to the work of the Christian social assistance NGO '*Organização de Auxílio Fraternal*' (OAF), which worked with homeless people. Many of these people already lived from collecting recyclable materials in the streets. The social exclusion of these people was enormous, as they were viewed as potentially dangerous people, living from dealing with garbage. The payment for their work was also very low. OAF organized the people they were working with, to establish a cooperative – Coopamare. They began working in the city centre of São Paulo in 1989. In the beginning of the 1990s, the city administration (governed by PT) provided a more adequate space in a middle class district – Pinheiros. This was very good for Coopamare, as this district produces a lot of waste and therefore they had better access to recyclable materials than before.

### 1.2) Proposed activities

Coopamare is engaged in the collection and first processing of recyclable materials. I.e., they collect recyclable materials in the streets of São Paulo, especially with companies. At their worksite, they separate the different materials, so that different forms of plastic, paper, aluminium,... are all separated from each other. After being separated, they use a waste press, to compress the materials and to produce rather large parcels of the same material. The material is then stored in the Cooperative, to be sold in bulk to companies, who further process and recycle the material.

### 1.3) Management model and stakeholders involvement

Coopamare is collectively managed. As reported by its president, Silva, all workers receive the same salary, based upon the hours of work in the cooperative (including the personnel not directly involved in the collection and treatment of material, such as a safety guard and the accountant). The decisions are taken collectively in assemblies, which regularly occur once a month and also on special occasions or emergencies, when important decisions have to be taken. There is a management board, consisting of a president, financial manager, and an accounting committee, to care for the daily routines and prepare the assemblies.

Troughout Brazil, the collectors have involved a growing number of stakeholders. Now, they are recognized as one of the biggest movements within the internationally recognized Brazilian SSE-movement. As reported by Santos and Souza in their interview, the collectors achieved special importance since the beginning of the presidency of Lula in 2003. These relations are mainly maintained by the national organization MNCR.

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<sup>5</sup> Coopamare emerged more or less at the same time as another cooperative of this sector in Belo Horizonte. Elisabeth Grimberg, a leading expert on the field, stated in the interview, that in her point of view, the cooperative in Belo Horizonte appeared first. Nevertheless, Coopamare appeared during the same time and can thus be considered among the pioneers.

#### 1.4) Turnover and job creation/quality

Coopamare – as other collectors' cooperatives – has a rather high turnover of workers. At the time of research, it was composed by 21 employees, 62% of them female. The interviews (Leite, Silva) revealed that women tend to stay much longer and sustain the activities, while many men tend to view their activities as rather temporary – until they found 'something better'. The main reason for that is, that the work with garbage is still seen as 'dirty' and salaries are still very low in comparison to other jobs, despite important improvements in both regards. The collective organization in cooperatives and – from the beginning of the 2000s onwards – the national political organization via MNCR helped to improve problems of low wages and prejudice, but there is still a long way to go. Coopamare works together with a social assistance centre in São Paulo (called 'Recifran') which indicates possible new workers, after they have gone through an initial period of training.

#### 1.5) Social and ecological externalities

There are little externalities. Some people see the very existence of collectors as a societal problems and would prefer everything to be handled by bigger companies for waste disposal. The fact, that the collectors come from the poorest sections of society raises prejudice – some people are afraid that the poor might be drug addicts, alcoholics,... During our site visits, these sorts of prejudice have not been confirmed. Nevertheless, the interviewed persons stressed the fact, that it would be more just, if the collectors would not only receive a rather low payment for the materials supplied, but should also be entitled for a payment by companies and/or society (via state spending) for their service for the environment.

#### 1.6) Communication and advocacy

The main advocacy actions work via MNCR (more below). As the collectors are a particularly vulnerable group, advocacy by NGOs and state actors has always been important. The national government gave special support for the sector from 2003 onwards. For Coopamare, this resulted in the acquisition of machinery, especially trucks, to assist their work.

Considering its own advocacy, Coopamare is engaged in environmental education for the Brazilian society. This involves going from door to door to speak with the population, as well as talks in schools or universities, as confirmed by Silva. By engagement in such activities, the empowerment of a particularly vulnerable group is likely to be promoted.

#### 1.7) Networking, affiliations and openness of the Good practice to the existing networks

Coopamare is among the founding members of the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (MNCR) and its regional branches in the Southeast of Brazil and the state of São Paulo (Catasampa). Via these networks, Coopamare's members maintain contact with the wider sphere of SSE and Brazilian social movements more broadly. The international networking is also organized within MNCR. The Brazilian experience of collectors can be seen as a reference for Latin America and beyond. There are regular exchanges within the wider region and beyond (e.g. during the World Social Forums). These exchanges can be seen as a part of the efforts of the collectors' movements to promote co-education. Workers learn through mutual exchange. Besides that, there are also links to university centers, specialized in dealing with SSE (Incubadoras Tecnológicas de Cooperativas Populares – ITCPs), NGOs, and government agencies – which also have an important role concerning the advocacy activities.



## Evaluation of the Good practice

**(Every point about 2000 characters)** n.b. quote as possible stakeholders' evaluations recorded in the previous interviews

### 2.1) The Good practice's economic and social impact and potential

The most important contribution of Coopamare – and, generally speaking, the SSE-initiatives of collectors of recyclable material – has been defined by the interviewed experts and practitioners as the provision of employment for socially excluded people. As reported by Gimberg, Coopamare has a very special role, as it was the first cooperative to organize the very poor people living on the streets and living from selling recyclable materials. For these people, who were 'the most excluded among the excluded' (Grimberg), the very activity of providing a more decent form of earning their living was of utmost importance. With the initial financial and organizational help of the Christian NGO OAF, the cooperative has been set up, to promote better working conditions for the hitherto homeless people. While most of them only possessed a handcart to carry the recyclable material, which was often used as shelter during the night, the cooperative provided better means to sustain themselves. As mentioned by Leite, the mere existence of a waste press is already important, as this enables the collectors to sell larger quantities in bulk. Thereby, they can achieve much better prices, than by selling smaller quantities of material, which generate proportionally much smaller revenue.

As reported by the leading expert Grimberg in the interview, the activities of collectors' cooperatives, such as Coopamare, are of central importance for economic and environmental development. The recycling of waste is a very important duty, as it is an alternative to much less environmentally sustainable practices, such as buried in the soil or being burnt. It is estimated by the respective government agency IPEA, that 80% of all recycled waste in Brazil has been collected by the collectors of recyclable material, who thereby exercise a very important role for sustainable development in Brazil.

These two issues have been named by all interviewed persons. In Brazil, there is a considerably strong discourse, linking the issue of social inclusion to economic development (Leubolt 2013). If people are included into the consumer market, this is seen as beneficial, because only in this case a mass market can develop. As a result, social development can contribute to economic development. The discourse of sustainability is also of importance. The linking of the two issues of social inclusion and sustainable development can therefore be seen as a major contribution advance by the collectors of recyclable material.

### 2.2) The transformative impact on the territory and beyond

Empowerment, viewed as the transformation of social relations to empower hitherto excluded people, is seen as a major contribution by the collectors of the SSE sector. This has been confirmed by the interviews (especially: Ferreira, Grimberg, Silva, Singer) and has also gained a prominent place in the Brazilian literature (Medeiros and Macêdo 2006; Pinhel 2013; Wirth 2013). While the cooperatives, working 'at the bases' set the important starting point, the political engagement of the collectors culminated in the foundation of the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (MNCR) in 2001. A very important landmark in the actions of the collectors was the official inclusion as a category of workers in the Brazilian code of law in 2002. As Ferreira explained in the interview, this is a central reference, as it is important for the self-esteem of the collectors, not to be recognized as the 'poor', who need some (paternalistic) assistance, but as workers, doing an essential job for the Brazilian society. The success of the political movement of the collectors was further strengthened during the Lula government (more below).

The importance of recognition has already gained a lot of space in debates on social justice (cf. e.g. Fraser and Honneth 2003). In the case of the collectors, it is frequently mentioned as a central aspect of their actions – to overcome prejudice in society. Even though this issue remains a constant challenge, the success in regard of promoting the dignity of this group of workers has been widely recognized. An

important aspect, as noted by Grimberg, was the engagement of SSE organized collectors in the environmental education of the population, acting as professors for recycling.

According to Grimberg, Coopamare has a special role for the movement of collectors, as it was the pioneer initiative to organize better working conditions, better prices for the sold materials, as well as to fight for the rights and the social status of collectors of recyclable material.

Another important issue of transformative impact concerns gender: The Brazilian sub-minister for SSE, Singer stated in the interview, that 'today, women are the vanguard of the movement'. This is especially the case with the collectors of recyclable material, which have been reported by Singer as composing of about 70% women. In the case of Coopamare, Silva reported that 62% of the workers are women. He further reported that women mostly sustain the business, as they are more likely to stay than men. Leite confirmed this insight in regard to the research she coordinated on SSE. She further explained that considering special needs of some women – such as reserving some time to care for family members – the organization of SSE tends to be much more favourable than in conventional firms. According to her, this better consideration of work-life-balance might be an important reason for the more active role of women.

### 2.3) Policy impact of the Good practice

Poverty reduction has also been among the main development goals of the Brazilian government in recent years. Especially since the beginning of the Lula government in 2003, this role has also been officially recognized by the government. From 2003 onwards, the collectors have also gained the explicit support of the national government. As Ferreira explained in the interview, the (former) president always dealt with the collectors with respect to their role as workers, acknowledging that 'they do not fight for individual gains, but rather for the rights of their professional category'.

Throughout the 1990s, local support was strengthened for the collectors. In the city of São Paulo, Coopamare received the space to work by the municipal government in the beginning of the 1990s. After Erundina, the candidate of the Workers' Party (PT) was voted out of office, public support diminished dramatically, as reported by Grimberg in the interview. This also concerns the state of São Paulo, which has never been governed by PT and is considerably less cooperative towards the SSE in general, as reported by Santos and Souza in the interview. Therefore, the successive victories of PT candidates in presidential elections since 2003 can be seen as important, concerning public support of SSE and the collectors. This has also been confirmed by Coopamare's president Silva, who reported that the main public support for Coopamare during the last ten years came from the national government and public companies linked to the national government (such as *Banco do Brasil*), which financed important equipment, such as trucks.

As stated by Lara in the interview, the São Paulo municipal government also set up specific policies to support the collectors, e.g. by setting up new recycling centres, co-managed with collectors' cooperatives.

The most important policy field in recent time, where the collectors' influence (mainly via MNCR) has been decisive, is the new law for solid waste (PNRS), which has been drafted participatory, with the collectors being the most influential group. The law emanating out of the participatory process in 2010 did not only include the collectors in its drafting, but also considered the collectors in the execution of policies. The PNRS was incentivized by a national law (no. 12,305, Aug. 2nd 2010) and deals with the principles, objectives, instruments and directives of integrated waste management, including the responsibilities of waste creators and public entities. It is a national law affecting private and public entities on national, regional and municipal levels. In relation to the collectors, the PNRS follows the explicit objective of the 'integration of collectors of reusable and recyclable materials in the actions involving shared responsibility for the life-cycle of products' (article 7, item XII) and explicitly states the 'incentive for creation and development of cooperatives or other forms of association of collectors of reusable and recyclable materials' (article 8, item IV) among the political instruments.

## 2.4) Sustainability of the practice

Sustainability can be seen in two different ways, with regard to the collectors and Coopamare. On the one hand, the issue raised above (in chapter 2.1) of environmental sustainability is a central concern at the heart of the practice of the collectors and Coopamare. Recycling of waste is of utmost importance for sustainable development in cities. The city of São Paulo is only capable of recycling 2% of the total waste of the city, as the Director of Planning of the Municipal Authority of Urban Cleaning, Julia Moreno Lara, stated in our interview. Coopamare belongs to the autonomous cooperatives of collectors, who are not working under a partnership agreement who are not being counted in this low percentage. Despite the odds of receiving rather low prices for their material by the recycling companies, Coopamare is taking over a responsibility of the public authorities and is thereby contributing to the vital process for urban sustainability.

Sustainability can also be viewed in a sense of the SSE experience itself. It has largely been recognized that this issue is difficult to achieve for SSE organizations. As recognized in the interviews for the Brazilian mapping process, the generation of income (central challenge for 74% of SSE workers) and maintaining market competitiveness (64%) have been recognized as the two major challenges by the Brazilian SSE workers (SENAES 2013). If they fail in these fields, the continuation of the SSE initiative is at risk. As already stated above, this concerns especially the collectors, where a high turnover is rather normal. Given this fact, it is striking, that Coopamare has existed since 1989 and still functions according to the principles of SSE. The special role of women in this regard has already been pointed out above.

In a nutshell, Coopamare is a good example for sustainability in both regards – the environment and the longevity of the initiative.

## 2.5) Participatory space open to the territory

Recent research conducted in Brazil on SSE (Leite et al. 2015) showed that the collectors' experiences come closest to the ideal of SSE. As confirmed by the interviews of Leite and Sanchez, in many sectors, the ideals of SSE with regards to internal democracy and equitable payment schemes are not to be found in the practical experiences. On the contrary, there are numerous examples of cooperatives, which rather serve to precarize labour relations, where internal democracy is hardly present at all. Especially in the field of the factories taken over by their workers, this has frequently happened.

Leite stated, that in general, the collectors' initiatives practice the ideals of internal democracy and equal payment. The information gathered on the issue at the site of Coopamare was convincing: All workers are associates and there are no differentiations, e.g. of people being employed or working voluntarily. All associates earn the same, considering the hours spent working for Coopamare. The internal hierarchies also appeared to be flat. The directorate rather prepares decisions for discussion at assemblies than it would take important decisions by itself. The rather small size of 21 associates facilitates such a practice, as it is possible to call all associates for emergency meetings – as confirmed by Silva in the interview.

Besides the local scale of interaction at Coopamare, another important participatory space has been opened from 2003 onwards. The national government has set up an interministerial committee for social inclusion of collectors (CIISC) in 2003. This committee has been coordinated by the presidency (*Casa Civil*) and included representatives of the Ministries of Social Development, of Work and Employment, of the Environment and of Cities, as well as the most important state-owned companies (the National Economic and Social Development Bank (BNDES), the public banks *Caixa Econômica Federal* and *Banco do Brasil* and the semi-public oil company Petrobrás. Besides the government actors, the MNCR has also been represented in the committee (CIISC 2013). These efforts reached a peak by the end of the 2000s, when the national government decided to focus nation-wide participation on the question of waste management. The MNCR was the most important participant on all three levels of governance (municipal, regional and national), being highly active in constructing new national policies for waste management (*Política Nacional*

de Resíduos Sólidos – PNRS), as the national coordinator of the Fourth National Conference for the Environment, Ana Carla de Almeida, stated in an interview.

## What can we learn from the described Good practice?

### 3.1 Areas in which lessons can be learnt, key factors of success/failure, role of specific actors.

The example of the collectors of recyclable material revealed a combination of **promising results** considering the contribution of SSE to development efforts:

- Social inclusion of a particularly vulnerable group of workers
- Empowerment of the poor, going beyond the issues of better payment, but also including issues such as self-esteem
- Empowerment of women, who can be seen as ‘the vanguard of solidarity-based economy’ (Singer)
- Collectors’ cooperatives have a great commitment with the principles of solidarity-based economy, especially regarding internal democracy, and equitable payment (Leite, Sanchez, Silva).
- The link between environmental engagement and social inclusion
- The existence of a national movement and the strong political presence (Leite)
- The relative success of the collectors in recent years to become important actors in Brazilian policy making (Santos/ Souza)

The experience of Coopamare in São Paulo has been pointed out as a very important example of collectors’ SSE initiatives, as it is a pioneer experience, setting the ground for further engagement. Today, 5% of the people engaged in SSE in Brazil work in collectors’ initiatives (Gaiger et al. 2014, 64). One of Coopamare’s co-founders, Eduardo Ferreira, is not only still active at Coopamare, but also at the national movement of collectors (MNCR). The very existence of this movement has been pointed out as of utmost importance by Leite. The MNCR organizes collectors sharing the basic principles of SSE of internal democracy, equal payment and solidarity with other social movements. Its political engagement has been crucial for the empowerment of the collectors as a whole (including the collectors, who don’t work collectively), especially regarding the question of societal recognition and the fight against prejudice.

It has also been recognized, that there are difficulties considering the organization of poor people in SSE initiatives. The difficulties are heavily related to the question of economic survival. The lack of economic, social, and cultural capital creates **obstacles for the poor**, which are aggravated by a lack of education.

**Solutions** pointed out by the case of Coopamare are:

- State agencies, NGOs, or agencies linked to trade unions are vital in providing assistance, considering both financing and matters of advocacy.
- Training centres run by universities function as ‘social consultancies’ and give business and legal advice, as well as the participation in political education efforts.
- Initial training efforts for people can be ‘outsourced’ to specialized centres. In São Paulo, there is an entity co-financed by the municipal government and religious donors, which is responsible for the initial training of homeless people, to be prepared to work in cooperatives.
- Women have been identified as giving sustainability to the work of cooperatives such as Coopamare. A major reason for that is the better possibility to manage the work–life balance than in most conventional firms.

In a nutshell, the experiences of Coopamare and the collectors in general have pointed out potential to link efforts to promote economic, social and environmental development. Given the peculiar situation of the poor, it is important to stress, that the experience cannot be labelled a mere ‘bottom-up strategy’. I.e., it would have been impossible for the homeless people alone to construct all the necessary institutions.

Instead, the involvement of social NGOs and state actors was vital. Nevertheless, the involvement of these actors did not occur in the traditional 'paternalistic' way, but envisaged **collective self-management and empowerment** of the people involved. The respective strategy could be called '**bottom-linked**' instead of 'bottom-up' (cf. Oosterlynck et al. 2013) to highlight the role of the interplay of the poor as active protagonists with governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Despite the success of the collectors and Coopamare, there are also **problems**:

- Although the organization according to SSE principles has resulted in material gains for hitherto very excluded people, the revenue for their work is still comparably low. The **low payment** has been attributed to
  - The dependence on intermediaries, who try to exploit the collectors (Silva)
  - The non-payment for the environmental service (Grimberg, client's interview)
  - The mere engagement in the first processes of the value chain of recycling (Leite, Singer). A possible solution would be a further engagement in recycling itself. If linked to the further processing of recycled materials (perhaps together with other SSE initiatives), the revenue could be much higher.
- The high turnover of workers, as a considerable number sees the employment rather as a temporary solution than as a permanent solution (Sanchez, Silva). This problem is related to the precarious conditions of payment pointed out above and the issue of having to deal with waste.
- The majority of collectors is not working under the principles of SSE, but rather works independently (Singer). This can be attributed to a perceived loss of personal freedom, attributed to working collectively, with several formal and informal regulations.

Despite the remaining problems, the case of the collectors of recyclable material can be seen as an inspiring example of how SSE initiatives can contribute to the development of both the engaged activists and society. The work of the Brazilian collectors, exemplified by the experience of Coopamare contributed to social inclusion with further positive effects on economic development, while also promoting environmental sustainability and social development.

## Individual story

### 4.1 If possible, enclose an individual story/testimony which exemplifies the practice you describe.

Unfortunately, we did not get enough individual stories during the interviews, to be able to use them here. Instead, we will recall our own experiences in doing research with the collectors of Coopamare.



The pioneer cooperative of collectors is situated under a bridge in an upper-middle class district in the city of São Paulo (see the photos above). During daytime, it is always open, so that everybody can drop recyclable material at the entrance (cf. the photo on the left). The presence of machines and equipment is also visible. The right picture is the view from the bigger street, where Coopamare presents itself as 'at the service of the community' and also its belonging to the national movement MNCR.

The workers themselves were not too welcoming in the beginning, as they receive more research visits than they would like to. For our first visit, we arrived on a very busy day for the collectors, as they were preparing for the selling of the material. The cameras for the filmmaking of the project were tolerated, but most of the collectors rejected to be personally filmed. Despite increased self-confidence, a considerable number of them rather prefers not to be recognized as working with trash. The self-confidence was also visible, when they explained that they have reserved Wednesday for such matters as research, while we came on a Friday (due to a misunderstanding in the coordination with one of them).

For this reason, we re-scheduled another visit, realizing that some of the Wednesdays were already blocked, due to other researchers doing their jobs. On the first occasion, we had to return without being able to make any interviews. Instead, we got a display of the SSE organization of Coopamare. Due to an urgent problem, all the members of the cooperative were called and held a meeting. Such instances are seen as vital by all the members and the participation of strangers is not appreciated. Enriched by the presentation of the working of internal democracy, we came back a week later. These episodes contributed to reach an atmosphere of trust, to be able to work with the collectors.

The interviews even gave a better impression on the workings social and solidarity-based economy at Coopamare. Coming from poor background, abstract concepts – including the very concept of SSE – were not very well-known. Asked about the organization of labour and the tasks they performed, it became clear that they practice a very advanced form of SSE – fully self-organized and democratic in both decision making and payment, while being aware of their contribution to the environment. Coopamare's president, Alisson Borges da Silva declared that his vision for a just society would be that "things worked similar to how they work in Coopamare. This regards especially the issue of everybody helping each other". Despite the odds, people were proud to carry out useful work, although some rather saw it as a temporary solution.

The members of Coopamare are well aware, that they are vitally contributing to sustainable development and poverty reduction. Despite this, the relationship with the urban authorities has not always been positive. Sometimes even threatened with removal from their site in the upper-middle class neighbourhood, the people of Coopamare are now not afraid of something like this to happen. The first reason for that is the backing by national policy making, even the former president Lula had a "historic visit" of Coopamare, as their president explained. "Furthermore, we are now international. Researchers and activists from all over the world come to visit us – like you", as he continued with a smile. Despite the odds, the stage seems to be set so that Coopamare's contribution to economic, social, and environmental development can continue – supported by their national and international networking.



## Additional information

### Stakeholder mapping

	Low Power	High Power
High Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (<i>Movimento Nacional de Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis</i> – MNCR)</li> <li>• NGOs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Caritas</li> <li>○ Instituto Polis</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Universities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ UniSol</li> <li>○ USP</li> <li>○ Unicamp</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Incubadoras Tecnológicas de Cooperativas Populares (ITCP): University-based Consultancy for SSE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Government:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ National Secretary for Solidarity-Based Economy (SENAES)</li> <li>○ National Ministry for Employment and Income</li> <li>○ National Ministry for Social Development</li> <li>○ National Ministry for the Environment</li> <li>○ National Ministry of Agrarian Development</li> <li>○ National Ministry for Development, Industry and External Commerce</li> </ul> </li> <li>• São Paulo City Administration:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Secretary for Employment and Income (Secretaria de Emprego e Renda)</li> <li>○ Municipal Authority of Urban Cleaning</li> <li>○ Secretary for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Low Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperatives and Associations working ‘at the base’ (Coopamare)</li> <li>• Social Assistance and Development NGOs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recifran (Serviço Franciscano de Apoio a Reciclagem)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Trade Unions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CUT</li> <li>○ UGT</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Organizations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Unicef</li> <li>○ Unido</li> <li>○ Unrisd</li> <li>○ The World Bank</li> </ul> </li> <li>• State-Owned Banks               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Caixa Economica Federal</li> <li>○ Banco do Brasil</li> </ul> </li> <li>• CSR in Enterprises               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Petrobras</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Interviews

We have conducted interviews with 5 national relevant stakeholders dealing both with Development Cooperation and Social and Solidarity Economy on the selection of the good practice:

- Governmental Development cooperation sector: Paul Singer
- Non-Governmental Development cooperation sector: Fabio Sanchez
- SSE sector: Marcia Leite
- Trade unions and/or social movements: Almir dos Santos, Jeferson de Oliveira Souza
- Local authorities: Sandra Faé

For the evaluation of the good practice, we have conducted 5 interviews with stakeholders concerned by the Good practice “Coopamare”

- Responsible of the association that realizes the good practice: Alisson Borges da Silva
- Worker/associate: Eduardo Ferreira
- Customer/beneficiary: Almir dos Anjos Padial
- Expert of a concerned network, sector: Elisabeth Grimberg
- Representative of Local Authorities: Julia Moreno Lara

## Selection of Good Practice

### Interview Prof. Paul Singer; São Paulo, July 31, 2015

#### 0.1) Name, position, territory, organization/Institution/Curriculum/Competencies in SSE

Prof. Paul Israel Singer, National State Secretary for Solidarity-Based Economy (Secretário Nacional de Economia Solidária); Emerited University Professor for Economics (leading politician and expert in Brazil, considering SSE)

#### 0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory

The big societal problem at the root of the creation of the solidarity-based economy in Brazil was unemployment, generated by the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s. This created a large group of homeless people, having to live on the streets. Solidarity-based economy began to be promoted in Brazil by organizations linked to the Catholic Church (Caritas), and has been taken up by leftist parties (especially the Workers' Party – PT) during the 1980s and 1990s. After the election of the PT-candidate Lula in 2002, the national secretariat of solidarity-based economy (Secretaria Nacional de Economia Solidária – SENAES) has been created in 2003.

#### 0.3) Describe your work/competencies in this context

In the city of São Paulo, the PT candidate Luiza Erundina governed from 1989 until 1992. I was Planning Secretary and was active in promoting the promotion of Solidarity-Based Economy. This happened, as the PT accepted the solidarity-based economy as central strategy to advance socialism. In this government, financing of solidarity-based initiatives began. After that government, I was active as professor in the promotion of Incubadoras Tecnológicas de Cooperativas Populares (ITCPs – consultancy for SSE).

When the national government by president Lula began in 2003, I was nominated as the National Secretary of Solidarity-Based Economy. The main duties of the ministry have been the organization of a national mapping process, and national conferences, with local and regional links, to assist the initiatives in their efforts of networking. Within the government, the secretariat has also been involved in inter-ministerial coordination, e.g. organizing the availability of credit via public banks. Especially in the field of poverty reduction, solidarity-based economy has been recognized as an important practice.

#### 0.4) Describe public responsibilities and/or advocacy activities you play in this context

The main duties as state secretary are the inter-ministerial coordination and the assistance in networking and political influence for the movement of solidarity-based economy, described above.

With the program 'Brazil without Misery' (*Brasil sem miséria*) the financial means to promote Solidarity-Based Economy have been improved.

### Selection of SSE Good practice

#### 1.1) A definition of Social and Solidarity Economy initiatives

SSE has been inspired by the principles of the 30 workers in Rocheford, who founded the pioneer cooperative in Great Britain. The invited self-management, where everything was decided democratically.

The central principles put forward are

- internal democracy, i.e. all workers have the same right to vote and their votes count equally
- internally just payment, with much lesser inequalities than in the non-SSE sectors of the economy
- mutual self-help, i.e. one cooperative will assist other cooperatives in need

The essence of solidarity-based economy is democracy: Firms do not need bosses and decisions can be taken democratically.

Today's Solidarity-Based Economy in Brazil has been highly influenced by progressive Christian activism.

1.2) Can you list almost 3 experiences you know that deal both with Development cooperation and SSE and describe them

1.3) Can you explain their positive and negative externalities on the territory

1.4) Can you indicate the most effective in your opinion, and why it is.

### **Evaluation of the Good practice**

*2.1) Can you describe the economic and social impact of the Best practice and its potential*

The cooperatives of collectors of recyclable material organize people who are excluded from society and in a very difficult situation: people living in the streets – as a result of unemployment having lost their job – are organized to find a decent way to earn their living wage. Therefore, the cooperatives are contributing strongly to poverty reduction.

*2.2) Do you describe the transformative power and the sustainability of the Best practice*

Apart from the contribution to poverty reduction, the cooperatives of collectors of recyclable material also contribute to environmentally sustainable development, as they are responsible for the recycling of waste, which otherwise would not be recycled.

It is very important to note, that the vast majority of collectors of recyclable materials are women. Every Christmas, I come to the “Christmas of Collectors”, where a big market of artisanal products made by recycled waste is held. Most of the products are made by women, who are the most important protagonists of solidarity-based economy today.

Women are the ‘vanguard of solidarity-based economy’ and the most creative collaborators.

*2.3) Can you list existing or possible policies that have been/could be inspired/generated by their activities*

The National Policies for the Dealing with Solid Waste are strongly influenced by the collectors. The importance attached to these policies has been strongly advocated the National Movement of Collectors.

*2.4) Can you indicate limits and possible improvements of the best practice*

Right now, the recyclable waste used by the collectors is generally the non-organic waste; it would be very good, if recycling schemes of organic waste could be started, as this could provide a very sustainable form of energy.

The collectors could also be more active in the further development of recycled products, which would guarantee a higher and more dignified wage.

Another issue is, that the majority of collectors of recyclable material in Brazil is still not working organized in SSE principles. A major reason for this, are the rules imposed by the cooperatives. An important challenge for all involved persons is therefore the revision of rules, so that they do not exclude people, who rather continue working by themselves, to keep their liberty. These persons should not feel restricted by the rules of cooperatives. The challenge to all of us is to think about rules, enabling these persons to participate without a sense of losing their autonomy.

### **What can we learn from the described Good practice?**

3.1) Please identify and analyse the areas in which lessons can be learnt, the key factors of success/failure, role of specific actors.

Solidarity-Based Economy provides economic possibilities, which are important. So-called ‘economic suicides’ as a result of unemployment of all relevant family members happened in Greece and Spain. The promotion of Solidarity-Based Economy is an important antidote against these practices.

The collectors of recyclable material are inspiring, as they actively involve women, who are the majority in the respective cooperatives. They found creative ways of mutual self-help, at the same time being also well-connected to the wider movement of Solidarity-Based Economy. The creativity in the environmentally

sustainable activity can be amazing, as I can always see, when visiting the yearly event of “Collectors’ Christmas”.

### **Interview Prof. Fabio Sanchez, August 20, 2015**

#### 0.1) Name, position, territory, organization/Institution/Curriculum/Competencies in SSE

Fabio Sanchez, coordinator of the Technological Incubator for Popular Cooperatives of the University of São Paulo (*Incubadora Tecnológica de Cooperativas Populares da Universidade de São Paulo – ITCP-USP*) between 1999 and 2001, in that time, executive manager of the network of ITCPs (*secretário-executivo da Rede de Incubadoras Tecnológicas de Cooperativas Populares*), coordinator of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Assembly of Solidarity Based Economy (*1ª Plenária Nacional de Economia Solidária*) in São Paulo 2002, between 2005 and 2011, he was head of the cabinet and vice-director of the National Sub-Ministry for Solidarity-based Economy (*chefe de gabinete e secretário-adjunto da Secretaria Nacional de Economia Solidária – SENAES*), now he is professor and researcher of the Federal University of São Carlos (*Universidade Federal de São Carlos*) in the state of São Paulo and is still working closely associated with SSE associations. (We interviewed him due to his practical engagement with SSE and development, especially due to his strong linkages with ITCPs. For that reason, we consider him as rather part of the **NGO**-sphere)

#### 0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory

The strengthening of SSE in Brazil is linked to the emergence of neoliberalism and the high rates of unemployment during the 1990s in Brazil. Many traditional social movement – e.g. the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – MST*) and the trade unions – geared their actions towards combatting unemployment and sub-employment (i.e. the growth of the informal sector with worse conditions concerning workers’ rights and working conditions). The actions of the municipal government of São Paulo between 2001 and 2004 were important, as they promoted innovative policies to deal with the question of employment – introducing cooperativism and SSE. With the election of Lula in 2002 for Brazilian president and the creation of SENAES in 2003, SSE began to be considered as an important policy to promote work and employment and to include new movements, such as the collectors of recyclable material.

#### 0.3) Describe your work/competencies in this context

Sociologist, university professor, researcher and activist, with the principal research activities being geared towards studying the transformations in the world of contemporary work, social movements of non-paid workers and SSE, and the institutionalization of public policies in the SSE sector. Consultant for social movements of the SSE sector, as well as for the Sub-Ministry for SSE (SENAES).

#### 0.4) Describe public responsibilities and/or advocacy activities you play in this context

In the academic context, promoting encounters and networks of SSE researchers. Activist for SSE at the ITCP-USP (the social consultancy institution of São Paulo’s biggest public university to assist SSE initiatives) and ITCP-UFSCar (consultancy at the federal public university of São Carlos).

### **Selection of SSE Good practice**

#### 1.1) A definition of Social and Solidarity Economy initiatives

SSE in Brazil began in the 1980s, when the first initiatives were promoted by the Brazilian Caritas, in the context of the Christian Base Communities (*Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*) (at that time, the name of ‘Solidarity-Based Economy’ has not been invented). The Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST) also began to create cooperatives in their efforts to promote agrarian reform. The trade union movement began to organize cooperatives for the management of companies in the process of going bankrupt. During the 1990s, with the rise of unemployment, social movements began to promote now forms of SSE.

The first public policies of SSE have been promoted in the 1990, e.g. in Santo André (a city in the outskirts of São Paulo). In 1999, the state government of Rio Grande do Sul created a department for Solidarity-Based Economy.

Since the beginning in the 1980s, SSE in Brazil rests on three pillars:

Self-management – a term already used in the heirs of the theology of liberation and the Cristian Base Communities

The left-wing organizations began to re-discover self-management during the 1980s

‘Citizen-trade-unionism’ being adopted by the biggest trade union CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores), when the CUT assumed the necessity to discuss how to safeguard jobs

In the 1990s, the emergence of the term ‘Solidarity-Based Economy’ (*Economia Solidária*, the Brazilian expression for SSE) is related to an article, Paul Singer wrote for the big national newspaper ‘*Folha de São Paulo*’, during the campaign of Luiza Erundina for mayor in the city of São Paulo. After he had written his article, the National Association for Workers in Self-Managed and Participatory Owned Companies (*Associação Nacional dos Trabalhadores em Empresas de Autogestão e Participação Acionária* – ANTEAG) invited him to get to know their projects.

1.2) Can you list almost 3 experiences you know that deal both with Development cooperation and SSE and describe them

During the 1990s, the factories taken over by the workers (*empresas recuperadas*) were a very important representation of SSE in Brazil – reflecting the centrality of the fight against unemployment. During the 2000s, they began to disappear politically and also to shrink in numbers. They gave way to new expressions of SSE, especially familiar agriculture (mostly in the countryside) and the collectors of recyclable material (mostly in the cities). Interestingly, the collectors organize themselves according the principles of SSE, many of them do not use the term ‘Solidarity Based Economy’. They seem to have gained political strength going beyond the movement of SSE.

1.3) Can you explain their positive and negative externalities on the territory

Between the 1990s and the 2000s, the movement of SSE underwent a transformation: During the 1990s, the plurality was already quite big, but the center of the movement was on cooperatives of production). During the 2000s, SSE got closer to environmental movements and the concepts of Buen Vivir and Vivir Bien (Bolivia and Ecuador). SSE is still very plural, but its significance has been transformed – possible negative externalities on the environment are now a much more central concern within the SSE movement than during the 1990s, when the main concern was the search for employment opportunities.

1.4) Can you indicate the most effective in your opinion, and why it is.

Citing the research done by Marcia Leite (see her interview, realized for this research as well) and Angela Araújo (both professors at the University of Campinas – Unicamp), Fabio Sanchez indicates, that the companies taken over by the workers (*empresas recuperadas*), adhering to SSE principles as organizational principles, were less successful in preserving the essential values of SSE than the cooperatives of collectors of recyclable material. It seems, as if the fact to be more close to the hard disputes in the labour market, these companies tended to centralize decisions and differentiate the income, up to a point to introduce non-associated workers. In comparison, the collectors were better able to maintain the principles, as the majority only consists of associated workers, practicing a considerable equal distribution of profits.

Many cooperatives of collectors have been incentivized by public policies, and have a very close relationship to public institutions. There is a great turnover of workers. E.g. in the case of Osasco (a suburb in the periphery of the city of São Paulo), the local public authorities offer a financial benefit to incentivize the admission into the cooperative. Locally, the majority of cooperatives is related to the bigger movement of SSE.

### **Interview Marcia de Paula Leite, August 20, 2015, Campinas**

0.1) Name, position, territory, organization/Institution/Curriculum/Competencies in SSE

Marcia de Paula Leite, Professor of Sociology at the faculty of education at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, specialist in labour economics, coordinator of a considerably big research project on the solidarity-based economy (2007-2012) with recently published (Leite 2015) final results.

## 0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory

Brazil is still suffering from its past: slavery has been abolished only in 1888 and left important traces, which have never been fully removed. The most important result of the Brazilian development was social exclusion → exclusion not only means very low salaries, but also exclusion from social and workers' rights, as well as political exclusion. As a result, the Brazilian society has been divided, and very little has been done to promote social inclusion (exceptions during the Vargas period in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, when workers' rights have been granted, albeit for a minority of the population). The most important expression of social exclusion is the division between formal and informal workers. When the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s hit Brazil, the rates of informality were rising to 60% and unemployment began to be a problem. The rapid urbanization process during the 20<sup>th</sup> century did only result in a shifting of the excluded population from the countryside to the cities and the majority of Brazilians continued to be excluded.

São Paulo can be seen as the territory best exemplifying the Brazilian situation of inequalities, where the contradictions are very visible: As the financial and economic centre of the country, São Paulo is the place with the largest number of Brazilian 'elites', while at the same time it also attracted a lot of migrants (many of them from the poorer parts of Brazil) who had to live in the cities shanty towns. So, São Paulo can be seen as the place where social inequalities are especially intense.

The solidarity-based economy emerged as an alternative in Brazil on the national scope, as it was included as an important alternative in the concluding resolution of the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre in 2001. Already before that, there was a movement of the workers to take over factories, which would have gone bankrupt. Thereby, the workers avoided unemployment and created structures of internal democracy and more just forms of payment.

Soon after that, the Workers' Party (PT) took office in 2003. Since then, many negative developments described before were improved. The labour market was formalized, with the numbers being changed, so that now 60% of the workers work in the formal sector (opposed to the 60% informal workers during the 1990s).

Interestingly, the solidarity-based economy continued to grow, while the labour market was also improving during the 2000s. Nevertheless, formerly important forms of SSE, such as the factories taken over by the workers have begun to enter into a state of decline, as they were a direct reaction against the worsening conditions of the labour market.

## 0.3) Describe your work/competencies in this context

Coordinating research as professor; supervising students to write M.A. or doctoral theses about the solidarity-based economy.

## 0.4) Describe public responsibilities and/or advocacy activities you play in this context

Advocacy is mainly the dialogue with politicians and syndicalists.

### **Selection of SSE Good practice**

#### 1.1) A definition of Social and Solidarity Economy initiatives

The central principles of solidarity-based economy are

- internal democracy, i.e. all workers have the same right to vote and their votes count equally
- internally just payment, with much lesser inequalities than in the non-SSE sectors of the economy

The essence of solidarity-based economy should be democracy. Nevertheless, the research revealed that the actually existing democracy is much less developed than it should be on paper. Many SSE enterprises have a lack of democracy. The majority of the SSE enterprises in the research even had an internal division



between associates and salaried workers. This was justified by the respective associates as a necessity to be able to react to crises by dismissing workers.

The problem of constructing an alternative enterprise within a capitalist environment is an important problem. Difficulties in this respect are great

1.2) Can you list almost 3 experiences you know that deal both with Development cooperation and SSE and describe them

- *Factories taken over by the workers* (fábricas recuperadas) have been very common during the 1980s and 1990s. To avoid unemployment after bankruptcy of their companies, workers started to take over the factories and implemented a sort of self-management
- *Artisanal cooperatives* are very predominantly female and organize issues such as collective buying of raw materials and the selling of the products
- *Collectors of recyclable material* are organizing collectively the collection and selling of recyclable material – but not the recycling in itself!

1.3) Can you explain their positive and negative externalities on the territory

All of them have great potential to contribute to the development of the territory, with the promises of

- promoting democratic self-management by the workers – a great achievement concerning democracy
- advancing the capacities of the labour market
- promoting social inclusion

Our research unfortunately showed, that in many cases, the promises are hollowed out quite substantially. Especially concerning workers' rights and internal democracy, the problems were most commonplace. This can be seen very clearly in the case of the factories taken over by the workers, which tended to depart a lot from the ideals of SSE. Artisanal cooperatives are organizing an important group of workers, but mostly do not promote collective organization to a large extent, as the work continues to be done individually. Many women working in these sectors do not earn enough to provide for a living for a family, but rather produce a compulsory income (besides the men, who have to earn the living of such families). Therefore, their experience cannot be generalized.

1.4) Can you indicate the most effective in your opinion, and why it is.

'In my opinion, the only true solidarity-based movement are the collectors of recyclable material'. These workers have proved in our research to be most in line with the central principles of solidarity-based economy: internal democracy and collective self-organization are best practiced by these workers; additionally, they were able to advance social inclusion for a particularly excluded group by means of nation-wide collective organization.

### **Evaluation of the Good practice**

2.1) *Can you describe the economic and social impact of the Best practice and its potential*

The collectors have always existed in the Brazilian society and used to be one of the most excluded groups. By the end of the 1990s they began to organize (more or less independently from the movement of SSE) to fight for their rights and they were quite successful (described below). In recent years, the collectors became to be incorporated as an important part of the movement of solidarity-based economy – to the advantage of both groups. The collectors are contributing to environmental sustainability, at the same time as they are promoting social inclusion.

This concerns especially women: for them it is often a great difference, compared to the circumstances they had to work in before (e.g. as domestic workers) to be empowered to take part in collective decision making. The work also enables them to find arrangements, if they have to take some time off to care for somebody in their family.

## *2.2) Do you describe the transformative power and the sustainability of the Best practice*

The political activities have transformed many collectors – in the sense of economic, political and social empowerment. It is impressive to see the difference in the peoples' lives, a new sense of self-confidence, but also of political activity.

In many cases, women are more likely to stay longer. While many men see the work as collectors as just a bad phase to have to carry out the dirty work with trash, much less women see it in this way. Due to the perceived empowerment (mentioned before), women tend to be more likely to stay and therefore promote sustainability for the praxis of the cooperatives.

## *2.3) Can you list existing or possible policies that have been/could be inspired/generated by their activities*

Already in 2002, their work began to be recognized in the Brazilian code of law. The new law of the treatment of solid waste also recognizes their important role. The active role of the movement in the construction of the law contributed to environmental sustainability in Brazil.

An important issue of environmental development has been raised by the collectors: the burning of waste – often practised with old European machines no longer in use in Europe for reasons of pollution – is very detrimental to the environment. Besides that, it disables the recycling of waste and thereby does not provide a sustainable use of resources. The political activism of the collectors is very strong regarding this issue and will hopefully influence Brazilian politics!

Another example of influence on politics has been shown in the work of one of my students: collectors in Southern Brazil rejected to be paid on individual basis for their work, but demanded the inclusion of the cooperative in the municipal schemes of waste management. Thereby they strengthened the collective approach of SSE in the workings of politics.

## *2.4) Can you indicate limits and possible improvements of the best practice*

The most important limit are the salaries, which are still very low.

A major reason for that, is that the collectors are still among the poorest parts of the population and – many times – cannot afford technical equipment, such as trucks, or even a squeezing machine to limit the bulk of the material. Combined with conditions of often not having sufficient space, this forces the cooperatives to sell the material in rather small quantities. The smaller the sold quantity, the less is the price received for the material. Therefore, the technical equipment and the availability of space to store material is important for their work.

Another reason for the low salaries is the non-engagement in the process of recycling itself. Thereby, the value-added is mostly earned by professional companies, while the collectors stay at the bottom of the economic hierarchy.

A first step to improve might be the technical material, while the next step might be the engagement in activities higher up in the value chain.

## **What can we learn from the described Good practice?**

3.1) Please identify and analyse the areas in which lessons can be learnt, the key factors of success/failure, role of specific actors.

The most important lessons to be drawn from the collectors of recyclable material are

- Social inclusion as a broad concept, not only encompassing better salaries and working conditions, but also issues of self-esteem and political empowerment
- The importance of collective self-organization of workers
- The importance of creating a national movement to represent the workers' interests

## **Individual story**

4.1) If possible, enclose an individual story/testimony which exemplifies the practice you describe. NB. This will help clarify the process you are describing and/or add qualitative information to it

The individual story concerned a negative example of a factory taken over by workers. The elected director of this firm behaved ever more like a traditional authoritarian boss of a firm – e.g. buying a car for the factory for personal use, employing a woman as secretary with whom he had great proximity. Even the regular assemblies were held less and less until they were even stopped. The director went as far as to try to prevent a general assembly to happen, which would have had to happen, as his term as director was over and a new director should have been elected. The result of this behaviour was that the company was not run well and encountered economic problems. In this specific case, this authoritarian behaviour also resulted in the workers rebelling against this director and resolving to vote him out of office and the company. On the one hand, this story exemplifies the problems encountered by many SSE-enterprises in Brazil, on the other hand, it also shows that – despite the odds – the workers were also empowered enough to get rid of this new boss. This process occurred in close cooperation with Unisol (the Brazilian organization for the exchange of universities and SSE enterprises). The same process would have been (nearly) impossible in a traditional company.

### **Interview Almir dos Santos, Jeferson de Oliveira Souza; Campinas, August 21, 2015**

0.2) Name, position, territory, organization/Institution/Curriculum/Competencies in SSE

Almir dos Santos, project manager at *Agência de Desenvolvimento Solidário* (ADS; Agency for Solidarity-Based Development), São Paulo, ADS is a branch of the biggest Brazilian trade union *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (CUT – Central Union of Workers) directly engaged with SSE.

Jeferson de Oliveira Souza, project manager at ADS, based in São Paulo, but working in projects all over Brazil (same as Almir dos Santos)

(The interview was conducted with both project managers at the Uni Campus of PUC Campinas)

0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory

The country is marked by sharp social inequalities, which have a strong impact on the labour market. This results in social exclusion of a large group of people. Exclusion concerns the patterns of class, race and gender. The current federal government (Lula and Dilma – since 2003) has put new efforts towards the fight against exclusion. Part of these efforts was the fortification of SSE, which has been viewed as a civil society effort to promote social development.

In general, the federal government has been opened towards social movements to promote social inclusion. On the regional level, in the state of São Paulo, the situation is different, as the regional government did not promote this partnership equally. Due to the lack of dialogue and cooperation, it is more difficult for SSE efforts in the state of São Paulo than in other states.

0.3) Describe your work/competencies in this context

The work of ADS is two-fold: technical assistance and political education for SSE-enterprises and networks.

Technical assistance is much-needed in many instances, as SSE-enterprises tend to be quite fragile. Most of the people engaged in SSE tend to be poor and with little educational background. Failure of SSE-enterprises due to a lack of employment-related education is therefore relatively easy to happen. Technical assistance mainly concerns the fields of selling and the acquisition of products. There are linkages to political education, as the assistance in forming of networks is among the major tasks of ADS.

Political education is the second major pillar of ADS's work. This mainly concerns the dealings with inequalities of class, race and gender: cooperatives are incentivised to take part in consciousness-raising concerning issues of racism, classism and gender-based discrimination. The latter also includes the dealing with transsexuals.

0.4) Describe public responsibilities and/or advocacy activities you play in this context

ADS works in a great number of projects, linked to government ministries, agencies and companies. Strong advocacy has been made regarding accessibility of credit at the state-owned development bank BNDES (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social); the opening of the rural development credit line PRONAF (*Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar* – National Program for Stengthening Family-Based Agriculture) for SSE enterprises can be seen as an important success of prior advocacy activities (in which ADS was one of the agents). Together with the *Secretaria Nacional da Economia Solidária* (SENAES; sub-ministry for SSE), ADS is carrying out a project to form networks of SSE-enterprises, which is seen as important for the development of SSE.

### **Selection of SSE Good practice**

#### 1.1) A definition of Social and Solidarity Economy initiatives

Cooperatives and associations are seen as SSE initiatives, if they

- are democratically managed
- empower workers
- are not discriminatory concerning gender, race and ethnicity
- respect the environment

the most important opposite of SSE are enterprises with bosses – sometimes ‘pseudo-SSE enterprises’ exist, where the democratic and social principles are not respected.

#### 1.2) Can you list almost 3 experiences you know that deal both with Development cooperation and SSE and describe them

An important field for SSE in the countryside has been the familiar agriculture. In this field, agribusiness has destroyed a lot of small- and medium-sized enterprises. The national government has interfered by promoting a special credit line (PRONAF – see below) and by promoting nutrition in schools with fixed quotas for familiar agriculture. This program is currently re-organized in the state of São Paulo. There are many interesting examples in this large field of SSE, including the ‘cooperative without borders’, where in the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul, cooperations with cooperatives in the neighbouring countries are sought.

In the cities, social exclusion is different. It is virtually expressed by the existence of slums (*favelas/periferias/ quebradas*). In such surroundings, other forms of SSE have to be promoted.

Conscientious consumption is among the forms, capable of penetrating the urban environment. Here, producers and consumers are sought to be directly connected. Marketplaces are organized for this sake.

Culture is another important field of SSE in the cities. This includes e.g. community-based radio (*radio comunitário*), where radio stations or programs are organized on the base of the principles of SSE. Another recent example is the ‘*economia da quebrada*’ (‘slum economy’), where diverse social movements of the urban slums (e.g. of music groups of Funk or Hip-Hop music) are organized on the basis of SSE.

A very important urban movement are the collectors of recyclable material. They can be seen as ‘special friends of [former president] Lula’, who specifically promoted this group of especially excluded people. Already having formed a national movement prior to Lula’s presidency, the collectors were specifically able to influence national policies during the recent years.

Other important SSE initiatives include handicraft and the recuperated factories (*fábricas recuperadas*). The latter are enterprises which would normally have gone bankrupt. The workers safeguarded their jobs by taking over the enterprises and collectively manage them.

#### 1.3) Can you explain their positive and negative externalities on the territory

All the above mentioned examples promote social and economic development, while respecting the environment, albeit in different degrees.

#### 1.4) Can you indicate the most effective in your opinion, and why it is.

It is not possible to mention the most effective of these initiatives, which aim at different fields and/or environments (rural or urban).

The collectors of recyclable material have been very successful in influencing national policies. They can be seen as a consolidated model of SSE in Latin America. They are an 'illuminating model', as they combine social inclusion with environmental development. People living in extreme forms of poverty and misery can find jobs as collectors. The solidarity-based organization helps them to earn more decent wages. The political activities of the movement also contribute to further empowerment, as the contribution to the development of society as a whole has been made better visible. An important part of this contribution concerns the environment.

### **Interview Sandra Faé October 8, 2015**

0.2) Name, position, territory, organization/Institution/Curriculum/Competencies in SSE

Sandra Faé, São Paulo city administration, Vice-Director of the Department of Development, Work and Entrepreneurism (*Secretaria Municipal do Desenvolvimento, Trabalho e Empreendedorismo*)

0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory

The first experiences of SSE in Brazil began during the 1980s, in Porto Alegre, Belém, Santo André (in the state of São Paulo), Recife and São Paulo. The initiatives emerged as an answer to the economic crisis, to fight unemployment. During the 1990s, the movement grew stronger and began to gain support by public authorities, mostly on the local scale. During the 2000s, with the election of Lula as president, the national government began to seriously engage in the SSE sector.

0.3) Describe your work/competencies in this context

Sandra Faé has a long trajectory in SSE and related activities, being active at the Movement of Landless Workers (MST). From 2002 onwards, she worked for the São Paulo city administration, in the Department of Work, Employment and Income (*Secretaria de Trabalho, Emprego e Renda*), during the government of Marta Suplicy (PT, 2001-2004). After that, she coordinated the program *Osasco Solidário* in Osasco, a suburb of São Paulo. Besides these professional activities, she is also active in the Network of Public Policy Managers of SSE (*Rede de Gestores de Políticas Públicas de Economia Solidária*) since 2002.

0.4) Describe public responsibilities and/or advocacy activities you play in this context

The work of Sandra Faé has been related to managing SSE programs of local governments. Her work for the Network of Public Policy Managers of SSE is situated at the national scale and is related to the constant improvement of public policy support for SSE.

### **Selection of SSE Good practice**

1.1) A definition of Social and Solidarity Economy initiatives

SSE initiatives most important focus should be on participation and social control of work. There is a wide range of different initiatives, which organize themselves according to the principles of participation and social control of work.

1.2) Can you list almost 3 experiences you know that deal both with Development cooperation and SSE and describe them

The cooperatives of collectors of solid waste and recyclable material are uniting actions of social and economic development, with an important positive impact on the environment.

Another example would be community banks (*Bancos Comunitários*), which offer financial and banking services to people who have been excluded from these services. They are an important instrument for territorial development and the local fight against impoverishment, with respect to the specificities of each community.

The actions of Incubators of Cooperatives [university-based centres engaged in social consulting for SSE initiatives] are fundamental to channel efforts, together with public policy entities, to deal with SSE initiatives or with groups in the primary phase of organizing as SSE initiatives, called incubation.

1.3) Can you explain their positive and negative externalities on the territory

Public policies should involve citizens actively as social and political beings in the process of policy making. For this sake, the money flow from the national government to municipalities and cities should be increased and improved to guarantee continuation of policies. Now, the dis-continuity of public policies targeting SSE is a major problem. One of the counter-strategies is the education of SSE managers in policy making, but there should also be more laws and/or regulations in order to turn the process of vertical control of politics more effective. The implementation of a national policy framework might be a possible solution for the problem. Another problematic issue concerns the financing of SSE initiatives. As many of them are providing goods and services for the State, there should be more focused action to set up partnership agreements between the public sector and SSE initiatives.

1.4) Can you indicate the most effective in your opinion, and why it is.

## Interviews about the Good Practice

### Interview, Alisson Borges da Silva, São Paulo, September 10, 2015

Alisson Borges da Silva is the current president of Coopamare, and also working as one of the cooperative's associates.

#### A. PROFILE DATA

Name (of the initiative / group / organization / network): Coopamare

Legal Status: cooperative

Year of Establishment: 1989, as the first cooperative of collectors of recyclable material in Brazil

Main address: Rua Galeno de Almeida, 659, Pinheiros

City: São Paulo, SP

Country: Brazil

Working language/es: Portuguese

Activity's Territorial Level (multiple answer): Local; via the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (MNCR) also National, Regional, International

Web site (in case you have it): <http://www.coopamare.org.br/>

E-mail address: [contato@coopamare.org.br](mailto:contato@coopamare.org.br)

#### Number of members (if applicable):

- 21 members
- 8 men
- 13 women

The number of members is under constant fluctuation, as many people only want to work temporarily in the business where one has to deal with waste. The number indicated, thus represents the number of members

#### Number of employees (if applicable):

0 (all people working at Coopamare are members of the cooperative and receive the same salary, based on their hours of contribution to the work at the cooperative)

#### Number of volunteers (if applicable):

0 (all people working at Coopamare are members of the cooperative and receive the same salary, based on their hours of contribution to the work at the cooperative)



**Gender ratio (over total amount of members):**

62 % female (38% male)

**Is your activity characterized in terms of (multiple answer):**

- Trade
- Consumption
- Comment: the main activities are the collection of recyclable materials, the processing (separation and cleaning) and the selling in bulk; furthermore engagement in environmental education with regards to recycling

**B. IDENTITY ELEMENTS****What is your definition of Solidarity Economy? [Describe with a short text – max 500 words]**

(Introducing comment: as with many other cooperatives in the sector of collecting material in Brazil, the auto-identification with the term 'economia solidaria' (the Brazilian form of SSE) is rather limited. i.e. the people working in the collectors' cooperatives do not use the term actively in most of their statements, but rather practice the same values and are considered to be an important part of the SSE-movement, despite their auto-identification – as other interviews (e.g. with Marcia Leite or Fabio Sanchez) have confirmed, the collectors' cooperatives are practicing the values of SSE to a comparably high extent in Brazil.) (Due to the above-mentioned introduction, the question was posed a bit differently, referring to the values of work, used by the collectors)

The most important issue is collective production. This means for the work at Coopamare that there is no boss for the workers. Instead, decisions and payment is managed democratically. Payment is according to the hours worked by the persons and no differentiation is made with respect to the activities, people are performing at Coopamare (e.g. Accounting, or the different phases in the process of collecting and further processing the material).

The democratic decision-making process is important, in order to guarantee for the status to work without having a superior (or boss). The general assembly elects a directorate, which is carrying out quick decisions and the everyday-business and prepares larger questions to be discussed in the general assemblies. The directorate is regularly voted and re-voted by the members and consists of the president, the cashier, the secretary, and a fiscal council. Most decisions by the directorate is preliminary and has to be approved by the general assembly, to be effective.

**What is your mission?**

The central mission of Coopamare is to promote income for the members with decent work.

Besides that, another important issue is the preservation of nature.

Coopamare has been founded as an organization to promote very vulnerable and marginalized people by an NGO with Christian background. It is still heavily engaged in the activity of social inclusion. For that, it works together with a Christian center for social inclusion in the city center of São Paulo (called 'Recifran'). This center is active in the very first steps of education for marginalized people, and then enters in contact with Coopamare (or other cooperatives of the sector), to ask if they are able to accept another member. After a trial phase of a month, such a new member and the general assembly of Coopamare decide, whether she/he will stay or not.

**What is your vision?**

The vision for the greater society would be, that it would be very good, if things worked similar to how they work in Coopamare. This regards especially the issue of everybody helping the others – i.e. mutual help and respect.

For Coopamare itself, the vision for the future is, to be able to improve the infrastructure of Coopamare, in order to be able to be more productive and, hence, earn more money.

## **B.1. CONTEXT ELEMENTS**

### **Is there a specific legal or regulatory framework for SSE in your territory?**

The legal issues are not dealt with directly at Coopamare. This is part of the work, the national movement (Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis – MNCR) is doing. The workers at the base do not follow these developments very closely.

**if so, please specify which one(s):**

-

### **Do you think that the legal framework for SSE in your territory is sufficient and appropriate to promote its growth and development?**

-

### **Are there public policies oriented to Solidarity Economy promotion in your territory?**

Generally, the MNCR deals with these issues, so the concrete knowledge for the workers at Coopamare is rather limited.

With Lula taking office as national president in 2003, the situation generally improved. During his presidency (2003-2010), he even personally visited Coopamare, to show his support. After this historic visit, the federal government began to help in various ways.

The most important help by the federal government was the provision of money via the development fund of the state-owned bank 'Banco do Brasil' to provide finances to buy trucks.

**If so, please specify which ones (multiple answer):**

- Subsidies
- Grants

To buy trucks, 'Banco do Brasil' provided money; the regional organization of collectors, 'Catasampa' also got hold of financial means by the federal government, which were used to finance another truck.

### **Are there sectorial and territorial reports of statistical data on SSE in your Region/Country?**

Alisson is not aware of the statistical data.

Please specify the link to the website: -

## **B.2. ACTIVITY FIELD**

### **Which ones of the following domains of activity are better representative of your organization?**

- Eco-friendly goods/services
- Sustainable lifestyles
- Energy conservation
- Renewable/green technologies
- Reuse, recycling, redistribution
- Sports [comment: Alisson insisted on the fact, that the activities of Coopamare can be seen as sports activities, as some of them require a fair amount of strength and ability]

### **Which elements do you think that qualify your activity in the sense of solidarity? (multiple answer)**

- Ecologically or Environmentally Sustainable
- Democratic and decent working conditions
- Socially fair
- Economically democratic and sovereign

- Gender Equity [even though gender equity 'has not been explicitly discussed' at Coopamare, as Alison stated, the equal payment scheme qualifies the mentioning, from the point of view of the researchers]

## **C. EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICES**

### **C.1. NETWORK ORIENTED ACTIVITY**

#### **Are you part of a network?**

Yes

If so, which kind of network? (multiple answer)

- Local
- Regional
- National
- Sectorial

if so, please specify which one(s): The National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (MNCR) and the regional commission of MNCR in the Southeast and the local branch in São Paulo (CataSampa).

While CataSampa has a more direct connection with the cooperatives working at the base, the national movement MNCR, is seen as more bureaucratic and distant from the base.

#### **What is your role/contribution to this (these) network(s)?**

We are part of a management body (direction/coordination board): Eduardo Ferreira is part of the National Movement MNCR

#### **Do you have connections with universities or research centers?**

Yes

#### **If so, please specify which universities/centers:**

The Incubadora Tecnológica de Cooperativas Populares of the Universidade de São Paulo [ITCP-USP; the social training center of São Paulo University for cooperatives] has been working with Coopamare for several years.

Are you aware of the publication of a SSE mapping in your territory?

no

If so, please specify which one(s):

-

#### **Does your initiative / group / organization exercise political lobbying or collaborate with social movements?**

The collaboration is organized by the regional and national networks. At the base, Coopamare does not regularly collaborate with other social movements.

#### **If so, please specify with what social movement/campaigns:**

Coopamare is only active through the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Materials.

### **C.2. FUNCTIONING**

#### **Does your initiative / group / organization have indicators for the measurement and the systematisation of social, economic and environmental impacts?**

No, the only indicator, used personally by the collectors, is to see that the streets are much cleaner after they did their work.

If so, specify which ones:

-

**Which is the economical annual volume of your initiative / group / organization, measured in Euros?**

The average salary of the members ranges between 1 and 1,5 Minimum Salaries. [comment: this was the only data on the annual volume, Coopamare's president wanted to communicate; at the time of the interview, a minimum salary amounted to 788 Reais, which was about 200 Euros; considering this data, and the 21 persons being associates of Coopamare, the economical annual volume would be about: 60,000-100,000 Euros

**Does your initiative / group / organization work with Cooperative Credit Unions or other ethical financial services?**

No, the bank account is with a conventional bank; the cooperative does not engage in taking credits, as the interest rates in Brazil are very high. Bigger investments cannot be financed without specific help (such as by the state owned 'Banco do Brasil').

**Do you have and/or had economic relations and/or projects of cooperation for development with other European or non-European organizations?**

The relations are maintained by the MNCR

With organizations of European States

With organizations outside Europe

**Do you have policies to balance professional / family lives?**

All these issues are collectively discussed in assemblies. The working times and working hours are set there. If somebody wants to come later or leave earlier, or needs something else, it is possible, but has to be discussed in the assembly.

**Are there policies for equitable income between women and men?**

The issue has never been discussed from that point of view in the assemblies. The general principle of equal payment can be seen as important in this direction.

Women tend to stay longer than men, and thereby give continuity to the cooperative, while men tend to leave the cooperative after much shorter periods of working there.

**What type of products and services do you offer, exchange and/or consume?**

The central service to offer is the collection and processing of recyclable materials. Besides this, the collectors also provide environmental education, with regard to recycling.

**D. PRODUCTION CHAINS / SERVICES**

**Products / services that are offered.**

Please list in detail at least 10 elements:

- Search for material, researching if it is possible to get payment and how much
- Search for the correct destiny of the material
- Environmental education
  - giving talks at schools
  - giving talks at universities
  - going from door to door in the neighbourhood

**Products / services that are used in production processes.**

**List of materials, resources, etc. .. necessary to deliver the products (as many as possible)**

No specific materials are required

**Residues management**

The material which has to be separated and cannot be recycled is sent to the municipal government

**What logistical resources do you have?**

Cars and trucks; waste presses; balance (to know the exact weight of material to be sold)

**E. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

**What can we learn from your practice?**

**Please identify and analyse the areas in which lessons can be learnt, the key factors of success/failure, role of specific actors.**

The importance of dignity, to be recognized as full citizens with rights and duties. This generally worked well, and the situation improved considerably in recent years.

The fight for dignity for Coopamare has always involved a fight to be able to stay where they now are – in a noble district of the city. Against the attempts to remove them from their place in the district Pinheiros, the international recognition as a considerably positive example of a cooperative organizing hitherto marginalized people helped.

The general problem is the exploitation by the companies buying the recyclable material. The money obtained for the sold material has not been increased in recent years, while the inflation has. The result is the loss of salaries by the people of Coopamare, while the brokers and recycling firms are making profits. On the side of selling the material, there is still a lot of improvement to be made, to avoid the buyers abusing their power to exploit the collectors.

As a specific actor, the NGO OAF (*Organização de Auxílio Fraternal*), has been important since the foundation of Coopamare. It is an NGO engaged with people living in the streets.

**Interview Eduardo Ferreira, São Paulo, July 31, February 4, 2015**

Eduardo Ferreira is a worker at Coopamare; activist in the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material – MNCR; ‘first hour activist’: active since the foundation of Coopamare in 1989.

**A. PROFILE DATA**

Name (of the initiative / group / organization / network): Coopamare (Cooperativa dos Catadores de Papel, Aparas e Materiais Reaproveitáveis)

Legal Status: cooperative

Year of Establishment: 1989, as the first cooperative of collectors of recyclable material in Brazil

Main address: Rua Galeno de Almeida, 659, Pinheiros

City: São Paulo, SP

Country: Brazil

Working language/es: Portuguese

Activity's Territorial Level (multiple answer): Local; via the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (MNCR) also National, Regional, International

Web site (in case you have it): <http://www.coopamare.org.br/>

E-mail address: [contato@coopamare.org.br](mailto:contato@coopamare.org.br)

*Number of members (if applicable):*

See the response by the president of coopamare, Alisson Borges da Silva

*Number of employees (if applicable):*

See the response by the president of coopamare, Alisson Borges da Silva

*Number of volunteers (if applicable):*

See the response by the president of coopamare, Alisson Borges da Silva

*Gender ratio (over total amount of members):*

See the response by the president of coopamare, Alisson Borges da Silva

*Is your activity characterized in terms of (multiple answer):*

- Trade
- Consumption
- Comment: the main activities are the collection of recyclable materials, the processing (separation and cleaning) and the selling in bulk; furthermore engagement in environmental education with regards to recycling

## **B. IDENTITY ELEMENTS**

What is your definition of Solidarity Economy? [Describe with a short text – max 500 words]

Democratic self-management is central: this means to manage, discuss the question of selling, the collection of material, the organization of the working process is managed by the collectors themselves.

The very collective organization is very important: the collectors are no longer individualized and can find better strategies, to gain public recognition, as well as to get more money for the services. The recognition as a professional category of workers can be seen as one of the major advances, the collective organization promoted.

Solidarity-based ethics means that the cooperatives help each other, but also to include other socially disadvantaged groups such as unemployed people. Solidarity with other cooperatives is an important part of the practice: today they are organized in networks of mutual assistance.

It is also important to note, that the founding of the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Recicláveis – MNCR)<sup>6</sup>, created important public visibility. Thereby, public authorities and the society in general began to value the work of the collectors, especially related to the environment, sustainability and the aspect of social inclusion. This is partly reflected in the formulation of the National Policy of Solid Waste, where there was important participation of the MNCR and the participation in the IV Conference of the Environment. In the participatory process, the cooperation with other civil society organizations strengthened the networking with other SSE organizations and the identity of the MNCR.

*What is your mission?*

The collection of recyclable materials; the separation of materials, the cleaning of material – the better these activities are done, the better the price which can be obtained.

Also environmental education: directly with customers as well as in schools, where collectors come to educate about how to recycle waste.

The main goals of collective organization are the legal and social recognition of the collectors' work as positive for sustainable development.

*What is your vision?*

To recycle waste and thereby contribute to sustainable development. Thereby to be recognized as a dignified group of workers – not as poor people who are either pitied or viewed with prejudice.

### **B.1. CONTEXT ELEMENTS**

*Is there a specific legal or regulatory framework for SSE in your territory?*

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<sup>6</sup> Note by the interviewers: The national movement does not explicitly call itself 'solidarity-based', but is organized guided by the principles of SSE.



Yes

*if so, please specify which one(s):*

The financing of SSE activities is made easier by specific credit lines of the public banks (BNDES, Banco do Brasil, Caixa Econômica Federal) which can be used to buy equipment. At Coopamare, it is still seen as a risk to take on credits. Therefore the schemes for public financing are more important.

The new National Policy for Solid Waste (*Política Nacional de Resíduos Sólidos – PNRS*) explicitly recognizes the special role of collectors in the process of recycling. The program *Pró-Catador* is the main ‘umbrella’ by the national government to channel resources for the benefit of the collectors, recognizing the work as positive for social and economic inclusion. In São Paulo, the new management scheme for solid waste (*Plano de Gestão Integrada de Resíduos Sólidos*) has been constructed with the participation of the regional branch of the MNCR. Positive results for the collectors are improvements in the availability and treatment of raw materials and financial means for educational purposes.

*Do you think that the legal framework for SSE in your territory is sufficient and appropriate to promote its growth and development?*

Concerning the collection of recyclable materials, it would be important to have a complete ban of the burning of waste, as this is not only detrimental to the earnings of collectors, but also bad for the environment.

Furthermore, if public or private companies collect waste, they should not use cars which compress waste, as this cannot be separated to be recycled afterwards. There should be a law to regulate that.

The companies should also be obliged to pay for the waste, they produce, and this should be the base of the payment for collectors of recyclable materials.

*Are there public policies oriented to Solidarity Economy promotion in your territory?*

There is a branch of a ministry (Secretaria Nacional de Economia Solidária) promoting solidarity-based economy. Concerning the cooperatives of collectors, during the Lula government, an interministerial commission has been created to deal with the specific questions of collectors. Ministries and state-owned companies (banks, petrol) therefore began to finance respective activities. In recent years, the treatment as a dignified group of workers in society.

*If so, please specify which ones (multiple answer):*

- Contracts and tenders for ethical / sustainable Public Procurement
- Subsidies
- Grants
- Specific Programmes and Conventions
- Others (please specify):

*Are there sectorial and territorial reports of statistical data on SSE in your Region/Country?*

Yes

Please specify the link to the website:<http://portal.mte.gov.br/ecosolidaria/cadastro-nacional-de-empresendimentos-economicos-solidarios/>

## **B.2. ACTIVITY FIELD**

*Which ones of the following domains of activity are better representative of your organization?*

- Eco-friendly goods/services
- Sustainable lifestyles
- Energy conservation
- Renewable/green technologies

➤ Reuse, recycling, redistribution

*Which elements do you think that qualify your activity in the sense of solidarity? (multiple answer)*

- Ecologically or Environmentally Sustainable
- Democratic and decent working conditions
- Socially fair
- Economically democratic and sovereign
- Gender Equity
- Others (please specify): Organization of a particularly excluded group; many collectors used to be treated badly, and seen negatively, as they were living in the streets

### **C. EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICES**

#### **C.1. NETWORK ORIENTED ACTIVITY**

*Are you part of a network?*

Yes

If so, which kind of network? (multiple answer)

- Local
- Regional
- National
- Sectorial

if so, please specify which one(s): The National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (MNCR) and the regional commission of MNCR in the Southeast and the local branch in São Paulo (CataSampa). These sectoral networks are working in networks with other Brazilian Solidarity-Based Initiatives and social movements.

*What is your role/contribution to this (these) network(s)?*

We are part of a management body (direction/coordination board): Eduardo Ferreira is part of the National Movement MNCR

*Do you have connections with universities or research centers?*

Yes

If so, please specify which universities/centers:

The foundation of Coopamare has been incentivized by catholic activists and a progressive local government in São Paulo, led by PT-mayor Luiza Erundina;

Instituto Polis,

*Are you aware of the publication of a SSE mapping in your territory?*

Yes

If so, please specify which one(s):

<http://portal.mte.gov.br/ecosolidaria/cadastro-nacional-de-empreendimentos-economicos-solidarios/>

*Does your initiative / group / organization exercise political lobbying or collaborate with social movements?*

Yes

If so, please specify with what social movement/campaigns: Coopamare is active through the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Materials.

#### **C.2. FUNCTIONING**

*Does your initiative / group / organization have indicators for the measurement and the systematisation of social, economic and environmental impacts?*

*If so, specify which ones:*

See the response by the president of Coopamare, Alisson Borges da Silva

*Which is the economical annual volume of your initiative / group / organization, measured in Euros?*

See the response by the president of Coopamare, Alisson Borges da Silva

*Does your initiative / group / organization work with Cooperative Credit Unions or other ethical financial services?*

The most important financing has been provided via the Federal government (with a president of the Workers' Party). Subsidized credits have been one source of financing, while some of the financing was also directly provided in forms of subsidies. Examples are fundings for an education program on the national scheme, or fundings for vehicles, or the provision of the space to do the work by municipal authorities.

*Do you have and/or had economic relations and/or projects of cooperation for development with other European or non-European organizations?*

yes

With organizations of European States

With organizations outside Europe

*Please, specify which ones:* The National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Materials (MNCR) is connected with the Latin American Network of Collectors. It has also been active in the World Social Forum Movement and thereby sought connections with other collectors of recyclable materials outside Latin America.

*Do you have policies to balance professional / family lives?*

See the response by the president of Coopamare, Alisson Borges da Silva

*Are there policies for equitable income between women and men?*

See the response by the president of Coopamare, Alisson Borges da Silva

*What type of products and services do you offer, exchange and/or consume?*

The central service to offer is the collection and processing of recyclable materials. Besides this, the collectors also provide environmental education, with regard to recycling.

#### **D. PRODUCTION CHAINS / SERVICES**

Products / services that are offered.

Please list in detail at least 10 elements: agriculture, consumption, support services, psychology, teaching children, transportation, mail ...

Products / services that are used in production processes.

List of materials, resources, etc... necessary to deliver the products (as many as possible)

Residues management.

What logistical resources do you have?

List the means of transportation, warehouses, stores (all relevant)

#### **E. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

**What can we learn from your practice?**

*Please identify and analyse the areas in which lessons can be learnt, the key factors of success/failure, role of specific actors.*

The importance of dignity, to be recognized as full citizens with rights and duties. Collectively organized, the collectors were able to advance a lot in this respect.

### **Interview with a client of Coopamare, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015**

0.1) Name, position, territory, organization/Institution/Curriculum/Competencies in SSE

Almir dos Anjos Padial, photo and film journalist

Regular client of Coopamare, delivering his recyclable waste material to the cooperative

0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory

In general, the economic situation is delicate at the moment, as growth stopped and there is a recession. This concerns both Brazil and São Paulo.

0.3) Describe your work/competencies in this context

-

0.4) Describe public responsibilities and/or advocacy activities you play in this context

-

### **Evaluation of the Good practice**

#### **2.1) Can you describe the economic and social impact of the Best practice and its potential**

The existence of the collectors and cooperatives such as Coopamare is of utmost importance for cities such as São Paulo.

The first reason, is that people can earn decent money. In an unequal country, such as Brazil, the social inclusion related to that, can be seen as an important contribution to development.

The second reason is the environment. The collectors contribute to the improvement of the environmental situation by diminishing the waste produced in the cities.

#### **2.2) Do you describe the transformative power and the sustainability of the Best practice**

The transformative power is described above. The provision of decent work for the marginalized can be seen as highly transformative. The work itself can be seen as an important contribution to the sustainability of cities.

Concerning work-place democracy, the aspirations are limited. Despite not knowing, how it is done exactly at Coopamare, there are generally always problems, as power structures from the mode how society is generally organized tend to influence cooperatives.

#### **2.3) Can you list existing or possible policies that have been/could be inspired/generated by their activities**

No, merely a client, providing recyclable material to Coopamare.

#### **2.4) Can you indicate limits and possible improvements of the best practice**

The infrastructure of Coopamare could be improved.

Today, the collectors are still too marginalized. It would be better, if they could enter into the formal labour market and enjoy the same workers' benefits, others have been granted as a right long ago.

### **What can we learn from the described Good practice?**

#### **3.1) Please identify and analyse the areas in which lessons can be learnt, the key factors of success/failure, role of specific actors.**

The preservation of the environment can be seen as something more important, if you see the quantities of waste being produced and further prepared for recycling at the cooperative.

The provision of income for the people working at Coopamare can be used to sustain families. This results in poverty reduction, an important component of development.

### **Interview Elisabeth Grimberg, Instituto Polis; São Paulo, July 31, January 26, 2015**

#### *0.1) Name, position, territory, organization/Institution/Curriculum/Competencies in SSE*

Elisabeth Grimberg, co-director of 'Instituto Polis' and director of the institute's area 'Solid Waste' (*resíduos sólidos*). 'Instituto Polis' is among the biggest Brazilian NGOs working with social movements and participation. There are strong links to the Solidarity-based and Social Economy (SSE) and its relation to development in the work of 'Instituto Polis': it acts as an advocacy NGO for the movement and is also producing related research.

Elisabeth Grimberg began to be active in the field of collective organization of collectors of recyclable materials at the end of the 1980s, accompanying the developments in the field at this time (the first cooperative of collectors of recyclable materials – Coopamare – has been founded in 1989).

#### *0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory*

The situation related to the collectors of recyclable materials: Generally among the poorest Brazilians, the collectors used to live on the streets and many times they were sleeping under their vehicles, used during the day to collect recyclable materials among the garbage. Especially in times of right-wing governments in São Paulo, the collectors had to face prejudice and even legal obstacles. The collectors of recyclable materials have been linked to the prejudice against people living on the streets, being linked to stories of drug trafficking/ abuse. Acts of violence against the collectors such as the destruction of their vehicles were reported in our internal research with the collectors.

#### *0.3) Describe your work/competencies in this context*

Research, advocacy and consulting related to the politics of sustainable urban development with special emphasis on solid waste and the collectors of recyclable material; especially related to social development, social movements, gender and participation/democracy

#### *0.4) Describe public responsibilities and/or advocacy activities you play in this context*

Advocacy for the collectors of recyclable materials, both acting as co-promoters of the rights of the collectors and their inclusion into public policies. 'Instituto Polis' provides research and consultancy for the collectors, to better enable them to participate in the policy making process. Active role in networks of diverse actors to influence policy making, organizing around political campaigns.

### **Evaluation of the Good practice**

#### *2.1) Can you describe the economic and social impact of the Best practice and its potential*

The recycling of waste is a very important duty, as it is an alternative to much less environmentally sustainable practices, such as buried in the soil or being burnt. It is estimated by the respective government agency IPEA, that 80% of all recycled waste in Brazil has been collected by the collectors of recyclable material, who thereby exercise a very important role for sustainable development in Brazil.

Coopamare has a very special role, as it was the first cooperative to organize the very poor people living on the streets and living from selling recyclable materials ('the most excluded among the excluded'). So it was the first initiative (in the beginning, without any interference of the state) to organize better working conditions, better prices for the sold materials, as well as to fight for the rights and the social status of collectors of recyclable material. The SSE organized collectors also began to be more and more active in the environmental education of the population, acting as professors for recycling.

#### *2.2) Do you describe the transformative power and the sustainability of the Best practice*

Coopamare exists since 1989 and can therefore be seen as a sustainable organization in the sector of SSE. It is not only the pioneer cooperative, but also active in the national and international organization of SSE-organized collectors (*Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis* – MNCR). Through the continuous work, not only working conditions improved. Prejudice against the collectors has diminished

and they are more and more included into public policy. Their work began to be legally recognized: The turning point has been the inclusion as a special category of workers in the Brazilian code of law. This can be seen as vital for the empowerment of a very excluded group of people. The democratic organization of work can also be seen as empowering. The result is an active social movement, in national and international networks.

The collectors' activities as 'environmental professors' also resulted in further empowerment of people, who often did not have the self-esteem in the beginning.

The cooperatives, especially Coopamare, have a praxis of approaching other collectors, who are working independently, and try to convince them to enter into the SSE-organized cooperative: the main factor is the better payment, and – little by little – the people who enter, learn to participate in decision making and are enabled to further empowerment by collective organization.

In general, women are the people who most sustain the cooperatives, especially in times of crisis, the women tend to leave much less than men, and thereby are the group of people to guarantee sustainability of the cooperatives of collectors.

An important detail has been the use of uniforms, which made the professional status of the collectors more visible. Another important detail was the use of machinery, such as trucks, which also helped to promote the positive recognition of collectors.

### *2.3) Can you list existing or possible policies that have been/could be inspired/generated by their activities*

There are numerous examples, e.g. in Porto Alegre, new housing complexes have been created already with the facilities for the separation of waste and materials for the collectors. Generally, recent years have been marked by a new interest in the issues related to recycling. On the municipal level, many local administrations have been adopting schemes of cooperation with the collectors of recyclable material; from the beginnings of the Lula government, also on the national level, cooperation with the cooperatives of collectors of recyclable began to be implemented: an inter-ministerial group for the inclusion of collectors of recyclable material has been set up.

The most important success of the SSE-movement of collectors was the very recognition of the importance of the collectors. While still questioned, whether it would be good to have collectors at all at the beginning of the 2000s, now a new consensus of the very necessity of collectors emerged.

### *2.4) Can you indicate limits and possible improvements of the best practice*

In the city of Sao Paulo, it is estimated that about 30% of recyclable materials are collected today. Only about 1% of the collected waste is collected by cooperatives of collectors with a direct contract with the city administration. This number could be substantially raised.

The majority of collectors of recyclable material is still not organized in SSE principles. Even though that the national movement working under SSE principles is politically fighting for the rights of all collectors, the percentage of SSE organized collectors should rise. Sometimes, the collective rules in the cooperatives or associations seem to be too strict for people, so that they prefer to work unorganized.

Even though the payment for the services of collectors has risen due to the activities of the SSE organized workers, it should be raised much more. Currently, there are discussions about payments for recycling, and enterprises responsible for the creation of waste should pay the collectors (current discussions about 'reverse logic' in the management of solid waste). Despite success in discussions on the national level and national laws, regulating the reverse logic in a more favourable way for the collectors, the law has so far not been properly implemented on the local level. The implementation and improvement of this law would be crucial, as it would guarantee a more decent wage for collectors.

The formation of networks is another issue to be improved, so that higher prices for the recyclable material could be enjoyed by everybody.

### **What can we learn from the described Good practice?**

3.1) Please identify and analyse the areas in which lessons can be learnt, the key factors of success/failure, role of specific actors.

Organization of the poor: It is vital for advocacy to actively include the poor. For political success of campaigns, it has proved vital to get the media. The direct and active participation of the SSE-organized collectors strengthened the role of the involved NGOs. Socio-ecological progress has been promoted in concrete policies due to the active role of the poor.

Dialogue internally and externally: Constant engagement to convince non-organized collectors to join SSE cooperatives or associations (internal dialogue); political activism, environmental education for the wider public (external dialogue)

### **Individual story**

4.1) If possible, enclose an individual story/testimony which exemplifies the practice you describe. NB. This will help clarify the process you are describing and/or add qualitative information to it

During the municipal elections in 2000, a big campaign made was organized by the collectors and related NGOs, called "Forum of Waste and Citizenship" (Foro de Lixo e Cidadania). This campaign approached the candidates for election and pressed for public inclusion. When the candidate of the Workers' Party (PT), Marta Suplicy, won the elections, the organized movements re-approached her, with media coverage, and managed to get the municipal government of Sao Paulo to pay for special amenities of education and training, as well as other means of public policy to contribute to the social inclusion of the poor, via the organization of cooperatives of collectors of recyclable materials.

### **Interview Julia Lara Moreno, Prefeitura Municipal de São Paulo**

0.1) Name, position, territory, organization/Institution/Curriculum/Competencies in SSE

Julia Moreno Lara, São Paulo City Administration, Director of Planning, Municipal Authority of Urban Cleaning; dealing with the inclusion of collectors of recyclable material into the urban cleaning programme

0.2) Describe the Social and Economic situation in the territory

Julia Lara Moreno professional focus is to organize the waste separation and collection and to turn the treatment of waste more efficient, to be able to receive higher quantities of waste than today. Today, only 2% of the total waste is recycled and the goal for 2016 is 10%. The city of São Paulo is currently managing the treatment of 20,000 tons of waste per day, of which 10,500 tons are domestically produced waste.

The process of separating materials is done by 22 cooperatives, working with dry and electronic waste. In addition, there are two big mechanized centres for waste separation, with a capacity of 250 tons per day each, while the combined 22 cooperatives have a capacity close to that. The public recycling system – including the collectors – deals with about 700 tons per day, while more than 19,000 tons are not separated and recycled. To deal with this problems, the municipal government has to organize a more efficient process, which is currently the biggest challenge – in which the cooperatives of collectors have a role.

0.3) Describe your work/competencies in this context

As director of planning and development, Julia Moreno is the key person in the implementation of the municipal plan of solid waste of the city of São Paulo. She seeks to increase and improve the relations of the city government with the sector of waste management, including the cooperatives of collectors of recyclable material.

0.4) Describe public responsibilities and/or advocacy activities you play in this context

Julia Moreno coordinated the process of participation in the re-drafting of the municipal plan of solid waste, which had extensive participation by the collectors of recyclable material – the majority of them organized in the (SSE-based) national movement (MNCR). The current government re-drafted the plan between the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, in the context of the Municipal Conference of the Environment, in a participative process carried out in all the 31 sub-municipalities of the city and eight

thematic conferences. The final round of the conference approved the plan. The participative process involved about 7,000 persons. These persons elected 800 delegates, representing all 31 sub-municipalities, with members of civil society, public authorities and entrepreneurs.

### **Evaluation of the Good practice**

2.1) Can you describe the economic and social impact of the Best practice and its potential

The cooperatives of collectors of recyclable material are contributing to the process of waste recycling. About 30% of the registered recycled waste is processed by the collectors. The total contribution of the collectors is estimated to be much higher, as many of them do not have a partnership agreement with the municipal government. Coopamare is among the cooperatives without such a partnership agreement and therefore not counted among the 22 cooperatives the municipal government has a direct relationship with.

The cooperatives in the partnership agreement have some advantages: amenities for the storage of recyclable material; delivery of the waste to be selected; accepting non-recyclable materials; equipment for screening and also individual protective equipment; supply of electricity and water; and professional qualification. Thus, the partnership cooperatives are freed of many duties to be able to concentrate on their core activity of recycling. Contrary to previous governments, the partnership agreements are now improved.

2.2) Do you describe the transformative power and the sustainability of the Best practice

The collectors of recyclable material do not only contribute to the recycling process, but also engage in the process of social inclusion. This combination is the main reason, why the municipal government is seeking partnerships with them. Besides this activity, they are also actively participating in the policies of waste treatment.

2.3) Can you list existing or possible policies that have been/could be inspired/generated by their activities

The collectors were a central agent in the drafting of the municipal plan of solid waste (see above). They also participate in the drafting and execution of a new municipal fund for recycling, financially fuelled by the profits of the mechanized recycling centrals and which are planned to receive larger funding through a new law of environmental responsibility for waste producing enterprises (*logística á reversa*). This fund is then used to publicly finance activities related to recycling and the work of the collectors.

The municipal administration is now also trying to obtain via the state-owned Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social (BNDES) external financing for the modernization and new implementation of mechanized centrals for cooperatives. This will make it possible to include more of the SSE initiatives directly into the municipal waste treatment system.

2.4) Can you indicate limits and possible improvements of the best practice

Until now, the participation of the collectors in the public waste collection is limited to 250 tons of material per day. The plan is, to extend this percentage to 1,250 tons per day. The government's plan is to enter into a partnership agreement with 24 new cooperatives, thereby more than duplicating the number of partnership agreements. This shall contribute to raise the percentage of recycled waste to 10% of the total waste being produced.

### **What can we learn from the described Good practice?**

3.1) Please identify and analyse the areas in which lessons can be learnt, the key factors of success/failure, role of specific actors.

The city of São Paulo is in a rather initial phase concerning the improvement of recycling rates and the infrastructure related to recycling. The big challenge in this context is to change the daily routines and practices of the population, to begin with the separation of the trash in the right places. Therefore, environmental education, as carried out by the collectors, is of vital importance.

The city administration is now trying to engage in a medium- to long-term process, in which the role of collectors will be central in the public service provision. The public administration is now putting an effort



into enlarging the stock of cooperatives with a contract of cooperation by trying to improve the conditions under which they are 'employed'. If the process will be successful, there will be significant improvements both for the urban environment and the professionalization of the collectors.

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