

Municipal Waste Management Policies and the Informal Recycling Sector: Reflecting on the impact of waste management policies on the informal sector in Cape Town, South Africa

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Municipal waste governance and integrated waste management

- ▶ Integrated waste management (IWM) as an approach to municipal solid waste management that recognizes the interrelationship of multiple factors (technical and non-technical) in waste management (Davies, 2008)
- ▶ It is a key component of the modernisation of municipal solid waste management systems (Scheinberg, 2011)
- ▶ Davies (2008) outlines key characteristics of IWM
 - a) Adopted across the globe for designing, analysing and optimising sustainable waste management systems (Davies, 2008)
 - b) Number of benefits: capacity and resources being optimized through economies of scale in relation to equipment or infrastructural developments or in terms of balancing costs across the whole waste system and with the participation of actors from public, private and civil society in appropriate roles (UNEP, 2008 in Davies, 2008: 13).
 - c) Language of integration removes the implications of hierarchy i.t.o. waste treatment - each waste management option has a role to play
 - d) Pragmatic approach

HOWEVER

It also produces a system of municipal governance that is often centralized, hierarchical and do not create an enabling environment for informal salvagers

Integrated waste management and informal waste economy

- ▶ Municipal policies and informal waste economy
 - a) Medina (2000; 2007) outlined 4 different policy responses to informal salvagers
 1. *Repression*: prevalent and dominant view of informal waste activities as a symbol of backwardness, 'waste picker' practices are considered as inhuman, a source of embarrassment and shame for the city and country
 2. *Neglect*: where the work of 'waste pickers' is largely ignored and local municipalities are indifferent towards 'waste pickers'
 3. *Collusion*: government officials develop relationships of exploitation and clientelism
 4. *Stimulation*: where 'waste pickers' are recognised and supported by local municipal governments
- ▶ There are three strands of debates in the literature on integrated waste management and informal salvaging
 - a) The role of waste pickers in the informal economy in IWM (for e.g. (Wilson et al., 2006; Sembiring and Nitvattananon, 2010)
 - b) IWM as a form of modernisation in solid waste management and how it excludes the informal economy (Dias, 2012)
 - c) Critical look at integration (Velis et al., 2012; Sekhwele and Samson, 2019; Samson, forthcoming)

Regulatory Context in which Informal recycling takes place

Pre 2008: Waste management policy and regulation

Godfrey and Oelofse (2018) outlined 4 key stages of waste management policy and regulation in South Africa

Age of landfilling and local municipalities

- ▶ Recycling activities mainly driven by the private sector, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations and the informal sector salvaging (Korfmacher, 1997; Karani and Jewasikewitz, 2007; Godfrey and Oelofse, 2017)
- ▶ Municipal responses to informal salvagers at landfills differed: some municipalities tolerated this activity (Samson, 2008); some would only restrict this activity if there was an outbreak of a disease (Khan, 1993)

Emergence of a recycling economy and local municipalities

- ▶ Early 2000s some municipalities developed 1st generation IWM plans that was in line with the waste hierarchy
- ▶ For e.g. CoCT separation at source in 2002 with Yellow Bag initiative (Dittke, 2004; Coetzee et al., 2014). Informal salvagers working at landfills benefitted from this initiative while those on the streets were affected

Post 2008: Waste management policy and regulation

Flood of regulation and local municipalities

- ▶ several key waste management policies have been developed and promulgated
- ▶ Significance of flood of regulation stage is that it made IWM planning compulsory at municipal level. Chapter 3 of Waste Act outlines the institutional responsibilities of IWM. The contents of the IWM plans must be aligned with the waste hierarchy as outlined in the NWMS
- ▶ Increased responsibility on local municipalities to divert waste from landfills

City of Cape Town Waste Management Landscape

► Waste management policies

- a) 2006 - Integrated waste management policy
- b) 2009 - Integrated waste management bylaw
- c) CoCT among the few municipalities that have consistently updated and reviewed their integrated waste management plans and is currently implementing their 3rd generation IWM plan.

Waste management practices

- a) Waste disposal at landfills
- b) Waste minimization is a key component of CoCT and is facilitated through waste minimisation initiatives and the appropriate waste management infrastructure
 - Waste management infrastructure: 25 drop off facilities, material recovery facilities
 - Waste minimisation initiatives: 1) Separation at source from household level; 2) waste recovery and sorting at drop off facilities; 3) home composting programme (diversion of organic waste)

Background of the CoCT: Integrated Waste Management Plans

First Generation IWMP	Second Generation IWMP	Third Generation IWMP
2006 - 2011	2012 - 2016	2017 - 2022
Key characteristic: Reflected the City's proactive approach to reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfills.	Key characteristic: Long term focused and shift towards compliance with NEMWA which compels municipalities to consider waste minimisation in terms of ensuring service provision	Key characteristic: Continue to implement long term vision of waste minimisation with a shift towards resource economy - conservation of resources and job creation
Main priorities of the plan: support strategies to manage and minimise waste, ensure sustainable and affordable services, and comply with the NWMS, as per the Waste Act (City of Cape Town, 2012).	Main priorities of the plan: Implementation of MSA Section 78 Assessment of alternative service delivery mechanisms -	Main priorities: Continue to implement the recommendations of MSA .78 assessment with a focus on waste to energy, landfill gas harvesting, development of composting plants, s@s

Regulatory Context in which informal recyclers operate



2006 - 2011: 1st Generation IWM Plan: Getting the basics right

- ▶ **IWMP Policy bans salvaging at landfill sites**

In 2008 the CoCT banned landfill salvaging, leaving many informal salvagers without a source of income (Chvatal, 2010; Huegel, 2013; Muller, 2015).

- ▶ **Outsourcing separation at source**

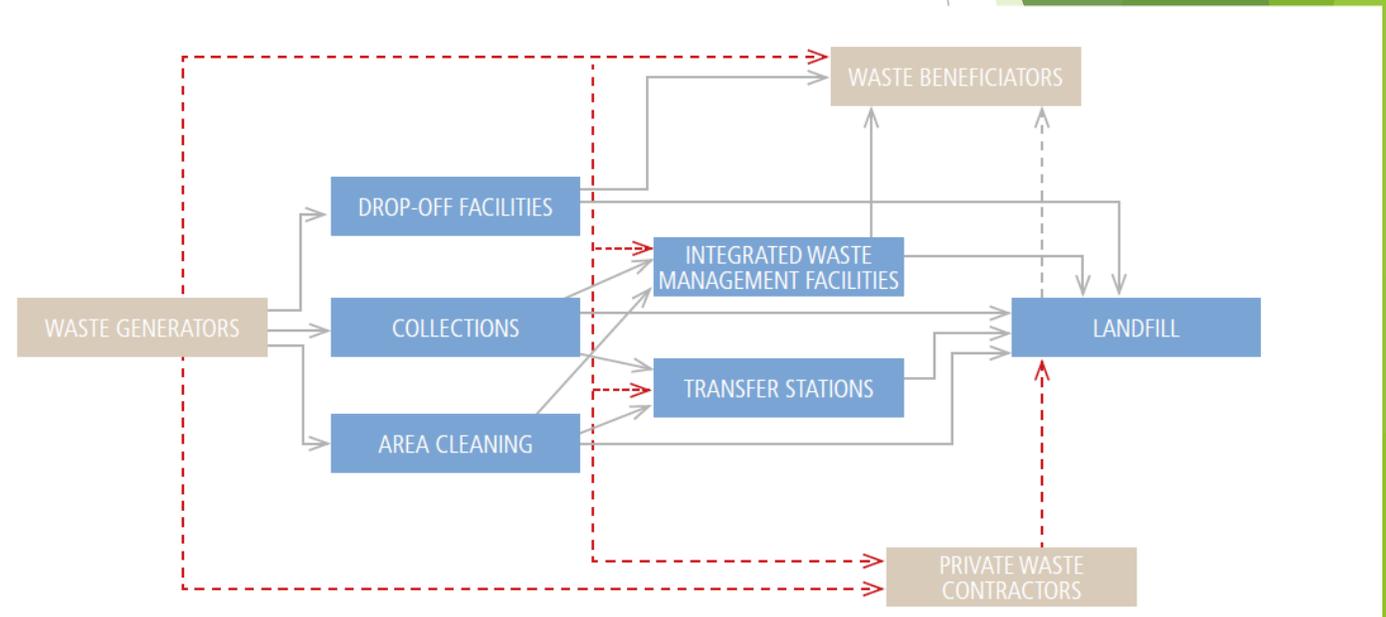
In 2009 the CoCT outsourced S@S - Think Twice Programme to private contractors

- ▶ **Establish the bulk of its waste management infrastructure (drop-off facilities, MRFs)**

2006 - 2011 the CoCT established the bulk of its waste management infrastructure in order to facilitate waste minimization

- ▶ **Integrated Waste Management Bylaw (IWMB),**

In 2009 the CoCT implemented its IWMB which regulates waste management in the city



Implications for informal salvagers

- ▶ Coupling of infrastructure, public-private partnerships and bylaws regulated the work of informal salvagers
 - a) by criminalization of informal salvaging at landfills through prohibiting their access to landfills, which was the main source of their livelihood
 - b) Expansion of s@s programmes - Think Twice regulated their access to recyclable materials
 - c) Bylaw don't make specific reference to informal salvagers but it sets out a number rules i.t.o who is eligible to deliver a service in the city, sets standards for the storage of waste

2012 - 2016: 2nd Generation IWM Plan: Towards a more effective and efficient integrated waste management system

- ▶ The focus is largely on waste minimisation service delivery
- ▶ Service delivery through public-private partnerships at waste management infrastructure
- ▶ The emergence of a particular type of 'service provider' with specific characteristics: capable, sustainable, entrepreneurial

Implications for the informal salvagers

- ▶ ‘Service’ driven approach do not recognise the existing work of informal salvagers. Informal salvagers provides a municipal service but are not paid for it as the city does not recognise it as a service or value their work in the same way as it does private contractors (Samson).
- ▶ Through PPP there started an enclosure of waste and waste management infrastructure that excluded informal salvagers

2017 - 2022: 3rd Generation IWM Plan: Expanding separation at source programmes to low-income areas

- ▶ The first time that reclaimers is mentioned in the IWMP
- ▶ PETCO (2016) highlighted the importance of recognising informal salvagers as role players in IWM and suggested that provision should be made to include them in the deliverables of the IWM plan
- ▶ Expanding s@s services in the city to low-income areas
 - a) In 2017 the City partnered with PackaChing with the aim of increasing recycling behaviour in informal settlements and low-income areas (City of Cape Town, 2018). This was piloted in Langa
 - b) The focus is largely on the resident and encouraging recycling behaviour
 - c) No reference is made to informal salvagers

Implications on informal salvagers

- ▶ Proponents of PackaChing have argued the following
 - a) It will enable informal salvagers to exchange recyclable materials at market price
 - b) There will be more transparency around the prices of recyclables
 - c) Mobile buy-back centres is beneficial because it brings the buy-back centre to the informal salvager - don't have to travel long distances

HOWEVER

- ▶ Expansion of s@s to informal settlements and lower income areas can be seen as an encroachment on the existing work of informal salvagers in these areas
 - a) Based on the assumption that the informal settlement or low income area is an untapped market
 - b) Incentivising community for recycling is good but what does this mean for informal salvagers?
 - c) It raises awareness among the community that waste is a commodity - could possible create competition, decrease access to recyclable materials
 - d) The focus is mainly on entrepreneurs - 'opportunity to extract recyclables from low-income areas'

Concluding Comments

- ▶ Integrated Waste Management fosters a regulatory context that had a negative impact on informal salvagers
- ▶ This well-organised system regulated the informal sector by **enclosing waste; encroaching on their work** and **does not recognise the service** that informal waste sector provides

Questions/Comments?