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Decent Work for All? Waste Pickers' Collective
Action Frames after Formalisation in Bogotá,
Colombia

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Abstract

This dissertation interrogates the impacts of economic inclusion on waste pickers' capacities to collectively demand 'decent work' for all waste pickers. Bogotá provides an index case for bottom-up economic inclusion, based on waste pickers' formalisation in co-operatives operating under free competition. It argues that narrow political opportunities pushed waste pickers into a competitive framework which ultimately reinforces inequalities and divisions between their organisations. As some business-oriented organisations (BOOs) concentrate on competing successfully, they distance themselves discursively and materially from 'unproductive' WPOs. Claims by welfare-oriented organisations (WOOs) for the state to provide for all waste pickers are subsequently marginalised. Thus, neoliberal discourse is reproduced in a formalisation framework which ultimately threatens to displace many waste pickers. These divisions are exacerbated, as WPOs framed inclusion as business development which leads to the neglect of constructing shared collective action frames and identities between all waste pickers.

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“[Waste pickers] are warriors. We are warriors because that’s why we are there. [...] We stand firm and haven’t kept waiting to receive some collaboration or help because of the pandemic. No, we have gone out there to complete our daily labour of recycling, we have put our hands in the waste, we have been in the sun and the ware. That’s what it means to be a warrior in life.” (W006)

“A waste picker lives with, lives from and takes from the waste. That’s a waste picker.”
(W005)

My gratitude further goes to my friends and family who have supported me throughout these times, providing a place to stay and lots of care when life came to a halt. Although spread across the world, you are very close. In addition, special thanks go to Luisa Tovar and Manuel Rosaldo who answered endless questions, provided contacts, readings, and a lot of inspiration. I deeply admire your work.

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Abbreviations

- ANR National Waste Picker Association (Spanish: Asociación Nacional de Recicladores)
- ARB Association of Waste Pickers Bogotá (Spanish: Asociación de Recicladores Bogotá)
- BOO Business-oriented organisation
- RUOR Unified Register of Waste Picker Associations (Spanish: Registro Único de Organizaciones de Recicladores)
- WOO Welfare-oriented organisation
- WPO Waste picker organisation

1. Introduction

Waste management systems in the Global South are unthinkable without waste pickers who collect, sort, and sell recyclable waste from households, public bins, and landfills¹. For example, in Latin America they provide around 50% of all recycling services (Lethbridge 2017, p. 28), thus reducing landfill use, pollution, and municipal waste management costs (Ezeah et al. 2013; Rodic-Wiersma et al. 2010). Nonetheless, waste pickers constitute a vulnerable population subject to social stigmatisation, unsafe working conditions and insecure livelihoods (Dias 2016). In recent years, their inclusion in municipal waste management has gained traction in political and academic debates, being considered to combine environmental protection, improved service provision and poverty alleviation (Colombijn and Morbidini 2017; Navarrete-Hernández and Navarrete-Hernández 2018).

While a consensus on the desirability of waste pickers' inclusion is slowly forming (Marello and Helwege 2018, p. 109; Lethbridge 2017, p. 21), the forms and effects of such inclusion are still subject to debate. Interpretations of inclusion include an expansion of state responsibilities towards vulnerable workers², a guarantee of business rights for formerly precarious enterprises, as well as increased regulation, taxation, and control of already marginal groups. The terms of inclusion are the product of collective bargaining between the state and informal workers. Accordingly, inclusion which moves waste pickers towards decent work, has always been the product of waste pickers' collective organisation (Samson 2015b). 'Decent work' is understood to be productive, remunerative, legally recognized work, guaranteeing rights to work, social protection and representation (ILO 2002, p. 4).

In an increasingly informalised global economy, it is key to understand the opportunities and limits of informal workers' organising for economic inclusion in order to create pathways towards 'decent work'. Waste pickers' "labor-intensive, low-technology, low-paid, unrecorded, and unregulated" activities (Medina 2007, p. 64) epitomise informal economies which include all remunerated activities "not recognised or protected under the legal and regulatory frameworks" (ILO 2002, p. 3). According to the ILO (2013) 2 billion people, representing 61% of the global workforce, work informally. As deregulation and globally fragmented workforces have eroded traditional union bargaining models, successful struggles of some of the most marginal workers can provide valuable insights into the opportunities and barriers to promoting 'decent work' for all.

¹ This term is used by the First World Conference of Waste Pickers to replace derogative terms which contribute to waste pickers' stigmatisation (WIEGO 2020b).

² "Workers" is used as a general term, irrespective of employment status.

Bogotá's formalisation framework has become a global role model for successful waste-picker-led inclusion; being globally unique in providing remuneration while maintaining free competition between waste pickers (Rosaldo 2016; Dias 2016; Parra 2015). To gain remuneration, waste pickers must join an organisation which must comply with comprehensive business regulations after a five-year transition period (Parra 2019b; Rateau and Tovar 2019). This model has been heralded for its inclusiveness of waste pickers' informal working models and its success in providing direct short term benefits (Parra 2015; Rosaldo 2018). This is remarkable, as waste pickers fought for inclusion in an overwhelmingly hostile environment, moving from being seen as 'disposable people' to restructuring the city's waste management system (Rosaldo 2016).

As the inclusion of Bogotá's waste pickers has been dependent on their political struggles, the impact of economic inclusion on their ability to act collectively is crucial for securing their livelihoods. This dissertation therefore investigates how economic inclusion of Bogotá's waste pickers has affected their capacity to collectively demand 'decent work' for all waste pickers. It is based on remote fieldwork, including interviews with leaders of twelve waste picker organisations (WPO). It integrates scholarship on informal economies and social movements to explore processes of collective organising in the wake of formalisation, paying particular attention the creation of collective action frames and identities.

It is argued that narrow political opportunities pushed waste pickers into a competitive framework which ultimately reinforces inequalities and divisions between their organisations. As some business-oriented organisations (BOOs) concentrate on competing successfully, they distance themselves discursively and materially from 'unproductive' WPOs. Claims by welfare-oriented organisations (WOOs) for the state to provide for all waste pickers are subsequently marginalised. Thus, neoliberal discourse is reproduced in a formalisation framework which ultimately threatens to displace many waste pickers. These divisions are exacerbated, as WPOs frame inclusion as business development which leads to the neglect of constructing shared collective action frames and identities between all waste pickers.

This dissertation first outlines different forms of economic inclusion and their relevance to waste pickers' livelihoods. A conceptual framework is then elaborated to interrogate impacts of political change on collective action, followed by a description of the research design and methodology. Subsequently, Colombia's formalisation framework is discussed in detail, emphasising the role of the state and discussions around displacement. Finally, the findings are discussed, highlighting the discursive divide between business-oriented and welfare-oriented organisations. These divisions are traced back to the conceptualisation of WPOs as enterprises.

2. Economic inclusion: overcoming exclusion or creating adverse incorporation?

2.1. Poverty alleviation through economic inclusion

The impact of formalisation on waste pickers' capacities to organise collectively is considered in the context of broader debates around the impacts of economic inclusion on the livelihoods of informal workers. Poverty in the informal economy has widely been understood as being created through exclusion from social, political and economic institutions (Du Toit 2004, p. 3); its cure is subsequently seen in *economic inclusion* of informal workers into formal markets and state regulation. Understood as *formalisation*, the expansion of state regulation over informal jobs, this can be achieved by reducing regulatory barriers, increasing enforcement of regulations and promoting formal sector growth (Chen 2005, pp. 19–21; Navarrete-Hernández and Navarrete-Hernández 2018). More recently, co-productionists and bottom-of-the-pyramid theorists have proposed to achieve inclusion without *formalisation* through partnerships between informal economies, private enterprises and the state. Pre-existing labour, knowledge and institutions could thus create mutual benefit without overwhelming limited state capacities (Joshi and Moore 2004; Prahalad and Hammond 2002; Booth 2011; Meagher 2013, pp. 13–18).

According to these scholars, economic inclusion should address the various deficiencies which define informal economies. A lack of property rights limits economic security and access to credit (Banerjee et al. 2011; Soto 1989). A lack of formal education, access to public goods, and capital inputs limit opportunities to invest and diversify economically (Bacchetta et al. 2009; La Porta and Shleifer 2014). Similarly, a lack of market access blocks innovation, competition and productive inputs (London et al. 2010; London and Hart 2010; Prahalad and Hammond 2002). A lack of social security, labour rights and voice endangers workers' livelihoods and prevents long-term investments (ILO 2002; Perry et al. 2007).

Economic inclusion therefore requires a comprehensive and context-specific framework, incorporating the issues mentioned above while taking the diversity of informal economies into account (WIEGO 2020a; Chen 2005). For waste pickers, this includes increasing and stabilising incomes, guaranteeing access to waste and security from harassment, providing social protection and basic services, supporting collective organising and bargaining mechanisms, and ensuring health and safety frameworks. As Table 1 shows, a range of policy options is available to achieve these goals. Taken together, these measures should ensure investments to increase productivity, improve working conditions, and provide livelihood security.

Issue	Regulation	Direct Support
Stable Incomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price guarantees • Restructuring of fee payments, to incentivise public to separate at source and co-operate with waste pickers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to machinery, warehouses, vehicles • Increased fee payments • Microcredit initiatives • Economic diversification through new services or recycling capacities • Operational and technical capacity building • Recycling pilot projects • Evaluation of current operations • Building of professional capacities
Guaranteed Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed access to waste • Exclusive recycling routes • Inclusion in waste management system • Incentives for service contracts with waste generators • Regularized waste picking services (e.g. Coordination with waste operators) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education campaigns for source separation
Personal Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal recognition and inclusion in policy frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public campaigns for waste picker recognition • ID cards and uniforms
Social Protection		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of social protection and pensions • Improved health and child care
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalised bargaining mechanisms with government, police, buyers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of collective organisation and linkages between organisations
Health & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate labour regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of protective gear

Table 1. Recommended policies for waste picker inclusion (Own elaboration based on Aparcana 2017; Navarrete-Hernández und Navarrete-Hernández 2018; Velis et al. 2012; WIEGO 2020a).

2.2. Collective bargaining for beneficial terms of inclusion

In contrast to these residual understandings of poverty, 'adverse incorporation' emphasises the *relational* character of poverty, created by the inclusion of marginalised actors on unfavourable terms (Du Toit 2004, p. 26; Hickey and Du Toit 2007). This view complements analysis of economic exclusion by addressing divergent interests and power relations defining parallel dynamics of inclusion and exclusion with disparate impacts on informal actors (Meagher and Lindell 2013, p. 65; Phillips 2011, p. 391). Adverse incorporation occurs as marginal actors are bound by economic and social constraints, including dependency relations and a lack of resources and discursive power (Du Toit 2004). Collective action becomes essential to overcome these factors and succeed in ongoing bargaining over the terms of inclusion (Chen 2012). Sekhwela and Samson (2020) exemplify how state understandings of inclusion can overpower those of informal actors. They demonstrate that while Johannesburg's waste pickers claimed institutional support, social benefits, and participation, state agencies insisted on their inclusion as self-sufficient service providers, thus leading to project failure.

Rather than being passive beneficiaries of formalisation, informal workers actively shape their terms of inclusion. The global rise of diverse movements demanding recognition, welfare benefits, and participation underscores the potential of collective action in informal economies. As state agencies regularly meet informal workers with repression, co-optation or neglect, mobilisation from below is essential to ensure beneficial terms of inclusion (McMillan et al. 2014; Scully 2016; Samson 2020; Lindell 2010; Agarwala 2008). Waste pickers' struggles for the expansion of public service provision in Colombia, Brazil and India represent some of the most comprehensive examples of bottom-up inclusion (Dias 2016; Samson 2015b).

Three areas of potential struggle around the terms of inclusion deserve particular attention. Firstly, costs and benefits of economic inclusion are negotiated between informal workers and the state. While informal workers can gain from organisational and business support, social protection, and recognition, state agencies are often more interested in expanding taxation and regulatory control, while shifting responsibilities to informal workers (Chen 2005, p. 22; Lindell and Appelblad 2009). This tendency is reproduced in donor policies and academic debates, often assuming automatic improvements to informal livelihoods (Ayee and Joshi 2008; Meagher 2018; Carroll 2011; Brautigam et al. 2008). However, regulatory compliance and taxation imply additional costs for already vulnerable actors (WIEGO 2020a). For example, waste pickers are seldom able to improve their livelihoods or create viable organisations without adequate state support (Sekhwela and Samson 2020; Silva and Mancini 2017; Gutberlet 2015; Tirado-Soto and Zamberlan 2013). Without such

support, inclusion normalises precarious working conditions by shifting the responsibility for poverty alleviation to informal actors themselves (Cheng 2014; Miraftab 2004).

Secondly, inclusion may cause dispossession of material and intangible assets in informal economies, rather than securing these. Following Harvey (2005), the recognition of informal activities as productive allows their appropriation for private benefit. Conceptually, this involves the conversion of common pool resources into private property (Elyachar 2005), often marginalising the weakest actors (Meagher and Lindell 2013, p. 66). For waste pickers, recognition of their value has often been accompanied by limited access to waste and their subordination in formal programmes of inclusion (Rosaldo 2019). This may for example occur through the extension of private enterprises into waste pickers' spheres of accumulation or regulations on recycling practices. As Samson (2015a, 2019) meticulously shows, top-down inclusion of waste pickers may mask their displacement from streets and landfills, resulting in a worsening of working conditions. Regularisation of work, even when benevolent, may dispossess waste pickers of supportive institutions and side incomes, including flea market sales and informal insurance systems (O'Hare 2020; Millar 2018). Formalisation programmes further constitute barriers of entry, limiting access to waste for those waste pickers who are unable to adapt to the exigencies of regular working schedules. In addition, formalisation often limits the amount of available jobs, eliminating waste picking as an occupation of last resort (Rosaldo 2019, p. 7; Colombijn and Morbidini 2017). Inclusion which benefits some may thus displace many others.

Thirdly, inclusion shifts power relations between the state and informal economies, as well as between informal actors. Optimists hold that inclusion of informal actors automatically strengthens their voice, as taxation and service provision increases their leverage and arenas of collective identity building and institutionalised negotiation with the state are created (Allen et al. 2006; Mitlin 2008; Moore 2008; Siame 2018). According to Dias (2020), the 'Waste and Citizenship Forums' in Brazil exemplify the potential of inclusion to improve waste pickers' representation, gain recognition, and secure redistributive and inclusionary policies.

However, ample evidence shows that the re-arrangement of linkages between formal, informal economies and the state can weaken collective organising in the informal economy. State agencies have frequently used participatory processes to expand control into informal organisations, often perceiving these as a potential threat. Such tactics may include the selective integration and repression of organisations, enhancing state influence and creating divisions between informal organisations (Lindell and Appelblad 2009; Lindell 2010, pp. 16–18; Mitlin 2008, p. 355). Furthermore, institutionalised bargaining and associated upward accountability can make informal organisations complicit in perpetuating state discourses and policies (Roy 2011, p. 267; Shefner

2006). In addition, increased exposure to competition and clientelist politics may increase divisions between informal actors (Meagher and Lindell 2013, 70f; Meagher 2010; Fernández-Kelly and Shefner 2006a). For example, Lindell and Appelblad (2009) show how the privatisation of market management undermines collective representation of vendors, as their organisations are fragmented under competition and partially displaced by private organisations solely accountable to the state.

In sum, economic inclusion intimately touches on livelihoods of informal workers, with the potential to overcome or ingrain poverty. Its impact on collective action in the informal economy is of particular importance as it determines future potential to achieve terms of inclusion which are beneficial to all informal workers. However, the impacts of inclusionary policies on informal labour movements remain subject to debate. The following section therefore lays out a conceptual framework for such analysis, drawing on social movement theories to assess the opportunities and challenges faced by Bogotá's waste pickers in continuous negotiations over their terms of inclusion while formalisation policies re-arrange their connections to the state and the formal economy.

3. Political movements in informal economies

3.1. Conceptual framework: political structures impact collective action frames

To interrogate the impacts of waste picker inclusion on their ability to organise collectively, this dissertation grounds constructivist understandings of collective action in structuralist approaches to social movements. Adapting Tarrow's (2011) and McAdam et al.'s (1996) syntheses of political opportunity theory, resource mobilisation theory and frame analysis; this dissertation centres on the ways in which political opportunities and threats shape the construction of collective action frames and identities.

Tarrow (2011) argues that political movements occur where threats are perceived, making action necessary, and change seems possible. Opportunities lie in the adaptation of state-sanctioned discourses, the availability of allies, divisions and a lack of repressive capacities in the state, and in spaces for bargaining with the state (Tarrow 1996). The complexity of political systems and broad criteria proposed by political opportunity theorists limit their predictive power (Goldstone 2004), leaving space to theorise about divergent effects of specific political events. For example, this can provide informal workers tools for negotiating terms of inclusion.

To take advantage of political openings and sustain themselves, movements must possess "social networks and connective structures" (Tarrow 2011, p.32). Movements rely on diverse 'organisational infrastructures', both networks of trust and material resources, to bargain collectively

and create public legitimacy (McAdam et al. 1996, 3f; Jenkins 1983). While greater availability of these resources suggests higher mobilisation success (Jenkins 1983), it also defines the actions taken by groups, handing power to leaders and donors. As shown above, shifts in the political environment have significant effects on the endowments of movements, especially in materially deprived settings.

Finally, social movements must discursively frame common grievances, potential solutions and courses of action in order to mobilise diverse groups. These collective action frames actively construct threats and opportunities, Benford and Snow (2000) but only become effective when they are internally consistent, and conform with values and lived experiences. Thus, they constrain demands and actions. Framing is intimately connected to the construction of collective identities, as both assign attributes and relationships to members of social movements, their allies, and opponents. Both are dependent on narratives, symbols, rituals, and the creation of emotional ties to create a shared purpose (Flesher Fominaya 2010; Polletta 1998). The parallel processes of distinction and inclusion of potential allies transported by these discursive practices define the internal cohesion and growth potential of movements (Benford and Snow 2000; Flesher Fominaya 2010). Thus, discursive practices are essential in studying unity and division in political movements.

Framing and identity construction are constrained by political opportunities and dominant discourses, as well as by available resources and institutions (Auyero 2006; Benford and Snow 2000). Firstly, processes of strategic framing and identity creation require resources, especially in the form of participants involved in meetings, mobilizing and protesting (Jenkins 1983; Flesher Fominaya 2010). Secondly, as frames are contested in the public arena, their success is further dependent on alignment with the beliefs and discourses of potential allies and the state (Benford and Snow 2000). Discursive strategies are thus directed both at (potential) members of the movement and the state. For example, struggles around the perception of informal actors and their movements can define repression, respect or stigma in everyday interactions, as well as the attractiveness for movements' potential members (Rosaldo 2018, p. 143). Performative strategies to reshape the *classification* of informal workers are therefore commonly part of their activist repertoires (Chun 2011).

3.2. Challenges to political movements in informal economies

The conceptual framework reveals the barriers political movements in informal economies persistently experience in creating effective collective action frames and identities, not least as a result of their political marginality. As informal economies lie outside the state's regulatory framework they are frequently subject to repression and have little access to institutionalised forms of collective bargaining (Meagher 2010). These limited options for engagement may result in dependence on patronage networks, thus perpetuating informal workers' marginality (Cross 1998;

Fernández-Kelly and Shefner 2006b; Meagher 2010; Du Toit 2004). Similarly, unequal power relations often lead to the co-optation of informal actors in alliances and multi-stakeholder arrangements (Andrae and Bäckman 2010; Meagher and Lindell 2013, p. 71; Jimu 2010). Nevertheless, informal workers have found new ways of opening channels of negotiation by forging alliances, making claims to the state, and navigating divides between state agencies (Agarwala 2008; Boampong 2010; Lindell 2010).

Furthermore, informal actors often lack the resources to build organisations which can bargain effectively with the state (Lindell 2010, 9f; Meagher 2010; Jimu 2010). This may result in a lack of capacities to organise effectively or navigate formal sector requirements and negotiations (Meagher 2010). This may also prevent their organisations from providing benefits to members to offset the costs of organising, especially as many informal workers depend on daily incomes for survival and cannot afford to invest time and energy in activities which are not immediately productive (Meagher 2010; Parra 2016, p. 365).

Finally, creating collective identities is impeded by the heterogeneity, fluidity and fragmentation of informal economies, which consist of employers, employees, and self-employed people with many shifting between different activities. They further consist of different occupations, ethnicities and religious groups, working to different norms, possessing different resources, power positions and interests (Chen 2005). This may impede organisational efforts, as places of collective identity construction are missing and sub-groups may be governed by exclusionary norms (Lindell 2010). Moreover, internal hierarchies marginalise the most vulnerable workers in informal movements (Boampong 2010; Meagher 2010).

As informal economies are fragmented, new forms of collective action are needed. The apparent inapplicability of traditional class-based mobilisation has created a call for transformed unionism to represent informal workers (Gallin 2002; Bonner and Spooner 2011). However, informal businesses may organise as *entrepreneurs* while unions' repertoires of action may still be focused on formal economies (Andrae and Bäckman 2010; Jimu 2010). Yet other scholars have highlighted rights-based struggles for welfare provision and against dispossession, moving away from the notion of labour struggles (Ferguson 2015; Scully 2016). These frames of collective action in informal economies create different demands and exclusions, defining the possibilities of successfully demanding decent work for all.

Drawing the connections between political structures, available resources, and practices of collective action framing and identity construction allows for an understanding of the ways in which

inclusionary policies enable or constrain certain frames of collective action in informal economies; laying the groundwork for this dissertation's empirical work. Speaking to social movement theory, these questions address the possibilities of organising in marginalized and fragmented groups of society (see van Stekelenburg et al. 2013).

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

Based on the conceptual framework outlined above, this study interrogates the development of waste pickers' collective action frames within the context of formalisation in Bogotá. Firstly, it examines what discourses WPOs use to frame their work and rights. Secondly, it investigates how demands made by different WPOs towards economic inclusion relate to state responsibilities for and displacement of waste pickers. Thirdly, it examines waste pickers' experience of unity and division.

These questions are answered using an interpretivist approach emphasising the experience of waste pickers themselves. To this end, applied thematic analysis based on in-depth interviews with leaders of WPOs is used, constantly checking identified themes with interview and background data (Guest et al. 2011). Following case study logic (Small 2009), these interviews implied an iterative process testing and refining hypotheses from theory and previous interviews to eventually create saturation in the results. By design, this research assumes that social construction of reality found in discourses is reflected in waste pickers' collective actions. Similarly, discourses are assumed to be impacted by shifts in political and material opportunities created by waste pickers' formalisation framework. While these assumptions are well founded in social movement theory and checked against available data, understanding organisational practices requires additional fieldwork.

Theory building, data collection and analysis were conducted iteratively, informing each other. Interviews were semi-structured and evolved in dialogue with the interviewee and throughout the research process. In this sense, interviewing represented a relational process of knowledge co-creation, actively involving the researcher (Fujii 2017). To understand possible divergences in discourse, material from interviews was compared with statements made publically. The author has been in continuous contact with most interviewees, allowing for follow-up questions as work progressed.

Similarly, coding was primarily inductive. Initial coding was conducted on background debates, before coding the interviews bottom-up, looking for grievances addressed, rights narratives, and relationships with key actors. As coding at this stage was simultaneous, queries and summaries were

used to create the coding frame outlined in Appendices III-VI (Saldaña 2015). The key differences in demands and narratives were used to divide organisations into two groups: BOOs and WOOs. This categorisation proved highly consistent, although deviation occurred mainly according to economic and political capacities of organisations.

I understand research as an ethical undertaking between myself and the interviewees. In studying development, research must be committed to addressing power relations producing “inequality, marginalisation and disempowerment” (Gardner and Lewis 2015, p. 45). As a researcher, this implies constantly reflecting the ways in which I think about and represent waste pickers, acknowledging the ways I reproduce discourses and silence subaltern voices (Kapoor 2004). This involves making uncertainty and under-representation of marginal voices transparent, working closely with interview texts, critically interrogating the relations created in interviews, and ensuring participants’ security through anonymisation³ and sensitivity to trauma in interviews. Once finalised, this work should be made accessible to Bogotá’s waste pickers.

4.2. Data

This research is based on 14 semi-structured interviews, including one group interview, conducted digitally during May-July 2020, ranging from 30-120 minutes. They include leaders of 12 different WPOs, as well as two waste pickers with experience in several organisations and one marketing professional of a second-level association.

Cases were selected to ensure a sufficient diversity of waste pickers to trace diverging narratives. Sampling was largely dependent on snowballing through contacts provided by researchers in the field and previous interviewees. Reaching out to waste pickers independently proved unsuccessful, unless these organisations were particularly engaged politically. This strategy is adequate to theorise about mechanisms of collective identity-making, but is not statistically representative of all waste pickers in Bogotá. In particular, it reproduces the invisibility of ‘weaker’ organisations and independent waste pickers who lack the connections and resources to be interviewed remotely.

Additional information was gathered to provide context for the interviews and verify the consistency of the narratives and demands expressed therein. This included informal conversations with waste pickers and researchers, attendance at digital local council and WPOs’ board meetings. Further data was used from waste pickers’ websites and publications, public debates, government databases and a review of relevant news. Nevertheless, this information is largely limited to the public discourses of

³ Transcriptions are therefore not attached to this dissertation.

WPOs leaders, obscuring the lived realities of waste pickers. Understanding organisational and political practices comprehensively requires detailed ethnographic research.

5. Case background: waste picker formalisation in Bogotá

5.1. The movement's origins: narrow opportunities for change

The formalisation of Bogotá's waste pickers provides a unique case of comprehensive economic inclusion, diverging significantly from the terms of inclusion achieved by waste pickers elsewhere (Dias 2016; Rosaldo 2018; Samson 2015b). This section provides an overview of Bogotá's political environment before and after formalisation, as well as the collective action frames waste pickers' mobilisations were originally based on.

In the 1990s, Colombia's atomised waste picker population emerged as a movement in a hostile environment characterised by violence and little political support, reacting to political shifts driven by free-market and human rights discourses. Following a push towards privatisation and environmental regulation, waste pickers were evicted from open landfills which had previously provided marginal yet secure livelihoods. Through these evictions waste pickers lost their collective workplace and faced harder work for less pay collecting waste from the streets where they were increasingly exposed to police repression, drug trafficking and criminality, as well as attacks from 'social cleansing groups' (Parra 2016, pp. 330–342; Rosaldo 2018, p. 356). This violence infamously peaked with the murder of 18 waste pickers and street vendors for organ trade in Barranquilla in 1992 (Molano 2018; Parra 2016, pp. 379–381). More subtly, waste pickers' livelihoods were endangered by continued privatisation of waste management, guided by a vision of a 'clean and modern' city in which 'dirty' waste pickers had no place (Rosaldo 2016, pp. 361–364). These threats prompted waste pickers' collective organising and increased visibility, especially where threats were most tangible (Parra 2016; Rosaldo 2016), while reinforcing the fragmentation and marginalisation of the majority of waste pickers⁴.

Besides threats of privatisation, the liberal turn in Colombian politics also opened opportunities to waste pickers. Most prominently, Colombia's 1991 constitution provided a human rights framework which enabled Bogotá's waste pickers to win legal recognition in a series of court cases between 2002 and 2011 (Parra 2015; Rosaldo 2018, p. 76). These obliged the state to systematically include waste pickers into municipal waste management and offer 'affirmative actions' by integrating WPOs into local waste management systems and providing technical support (Parra 2019b). It further

⁴ That worsening conditions for organising created motivation to act shows the complexity of predicting social movements.

improved their bargaining position, overturning Bogotá's US \$1.37bn waste management tender and credibly threatening the overwhelmingly non-compliant municipalities. This decision effectively gave Bogotá's leftist mayor, Gustavo Petro, a blank cheque to restructure the city's waste management system (Rosaldo 2018, pp. 75–98).

These victories were made with the continuous support of NGOs to nascent waste picker co-operatives, including financial aid, capacity building, networking and *pro bono* lawyers (Rosaldo 2016). This was crucial in enabling co-operatives to scale up their operations and provide benefits to their members (Parra 2016, pp. 364–371). This also enabled WPOs to construct collective identities and exploit new political openings by making public and legal claims for their protection (García 2011; Parra 2016, pp. 480–483; Rosaldo 2016). Nonetheless, the Colombian waste picker movement was still dependent on a narrow set of NGO allies, waste picker activists and political openings through legal cases, impacting their strategic decisions.

Organised waste pickers engaged in several performative strategies to frame their conditions in ways which were receptive to dominant free-market and human rights discourses (Rosaldo 2018, pp. 142–145). These included marches, public education campaigns, and depicting waste pickers as professional workers (Rosaldo 2016, 2018). They were instrumental in winning court cases, and an aim in themselves, creating collective identities and protecting waste pickers from harassment through increasing public recognition. Waste pickers cast themselves as a separate population, analogous to indigenous groups, worthy of special protection due to both the public and environmental services they provide, and their vulnerability (Rosaldo 2018, p. 141; Parra 2016, p. 274). Consistent with Redfield (2012), humanitarian rights to 'bare life' thus accompanied an expansion of market rule. This broad framing provides the basis for today's waste pickers' struggles, although containing competing rights narratives.

These narrow opportunities without wide-scale support by social movements and political allies shaped waste pickers' organisations which depicted themselves as enterprises securing their right to compete. In contrast to waste picker movements in Brazil and India, they did not pitch themselves as part of broader workers' struggles, neither countering privatisation nor claiming wider social and democratic transformation (Dias 2016; Rosaldo 2018, p. 70; Samson 2015b).

5.2. Formalisation: recognition, state responsibilities, and dispossession

The attempt to re-municipalise Bogotá's waste collection shows the strong opposition waste pickers face from state and private interests. In 2012, Petro created a public enterprise to take over waste

collection from private operators. Similar to the model implemented in Brazil, this public enterprise would contract waste picker co-operatives to work on exclusive collection routes and in state-owned sorting warehouses (Rosaldo 2019, pp. 13–14). However, private waste operators dropped out of their contracts early, causing a waste crisis in the city - and Petro's impeachment; he was only reinstated after mass protests (Rojas Calderón 2018; Rosaldo 2019).

Although generally supportive of Petro, the majority of Bogotá's organised waste pickers opposed his formalisation model, wary of potential dispossession. According to Rosaldo (2019), they feared it would limit available jobs and displace waste pickers who fail to adapt to formal work routines⁵. Moreover, they expressed fear of being brought under direct state control, citing experiences of repression and failed formalisation in other sectors (Rosaldo 2019, p. 16). This mistrust of state agencies partially explains the framing as autonomous entrepreneurs.

The majority of Bogotá's WPOs advocated for a globally unique model based on support of waste pickers' work under free competition (Parra 2015; Rosaldo 2019). Arguing that economic inclusion must begin by recognising existing recycling activities, they succeeded in securing individual remuneration per ton of recyclable materials sold by each waste picker and state donations of machinery, warehouses, vehicles and uniforms (Parra 2019a, pp. 17–21). This model is consistent with the liberal framing of waste pickers as enterprises, providing services in a free market. In the short term, it proved more inclusive and effective than state-centred formalisation in Brazil, improving incomes and working conditions of 13,000 waste pickers in the first two years (Rosaldo 2018, p. 144, 2019, 17f). However, it has been argued that this model effectively subsidises exploitation through intermediary buyers and shuts the door to re-conceiving public service provision as a democratic, state-led process (Rosaldo 2019, p. 19; Samson 2015b, p. 18). It should therefore be highlighted that this approach does *not* include any focus on participation, stabilisation of market-dependent incomes or an expansion of welfare benefits.

The model was adapted to guide formalisation nationally, most importantly through Decree 596 which outlines a "gradual, flexible, and dynamic" formalisation of waste pickers (MinVivienda 2016). This decree grants WPOs a five-year transition period to formalise by completing eight phases consisting of technical and regulatory standards, starting with their registration and ending with their recognition as financially viable enterprises, able to pay for their waste pickers' labour and pension insurance. During this period, waste pickers in registered organisations receive a part of waste management user fees per commercialised ton of waste. They are further guaranteed exclusive

⁵ These preoccupations are confirmed by studies across Latin America, showing that formalisation routinely supports very few waste pickers, often replacing those unwilling to adapt with external workers (O'Hare 2020; Rosaldo 2018; Villanova 2014).

access to recyclable waste, barring private enterprises from entering. Moreover, municipalities are obliged to provide affirmative actions.

Despite the assurance of affirmative action, Colombia's formalisation scheme shifts the responsibility for improving livelihoods to waste pickers. WPOs bear the costs of complying with regulations, VAT payments, provision of welfare benefits to associates, and investments in their organisation (Tovar 2018, pp. 53–55). WPOs must cover these costs from the proportion of fees assigned to the organisation. Municipalities' unwillingness to adequately accompany formalisation (Parra 2019b, p. 283) is exemplified by the cut-back of support, including donations and participatory mechanisms, and several attempts to obstruct access to waste undertaken by Petro's successor, Enrique Peñalosa (Parra 2019a). Consequently, the majority of waste picker organisations are still economically marginal and waste pickers remain poor (Espinosa and Corredor 2017). Furthermore, in 2018 no organisation was on track to formalise within the given timeframe (SSPD 2018).

Effectively, formalisation has created inequalities between WPOs, concentrating resources in few organisations. While the overall number of registered WPOs has grown to 179 in Bogotá alone, the majority remain small and relatively unproductive. In 2017 the majority of organisations consisted of less than 100 waste pickers, recycling 2.4t/month on average (Espinosa and Corredor 2017, pp. 20–24). Few organisations have been able to grow in size or productivity (Figures 1 and Table 2). These mainly belonged to two second-level associations which have been able to create stable bonds between WPOs, creating economies of scale (see Tirado-Soto and Zamberlan 2013). It has been argued that smaller organisations face particular problems as they lack the economies of scale and organisational capacities to formalise on time. Moreover, unorganised waste pickers are excluded from all benefits of this scheme (Tovar 2018).

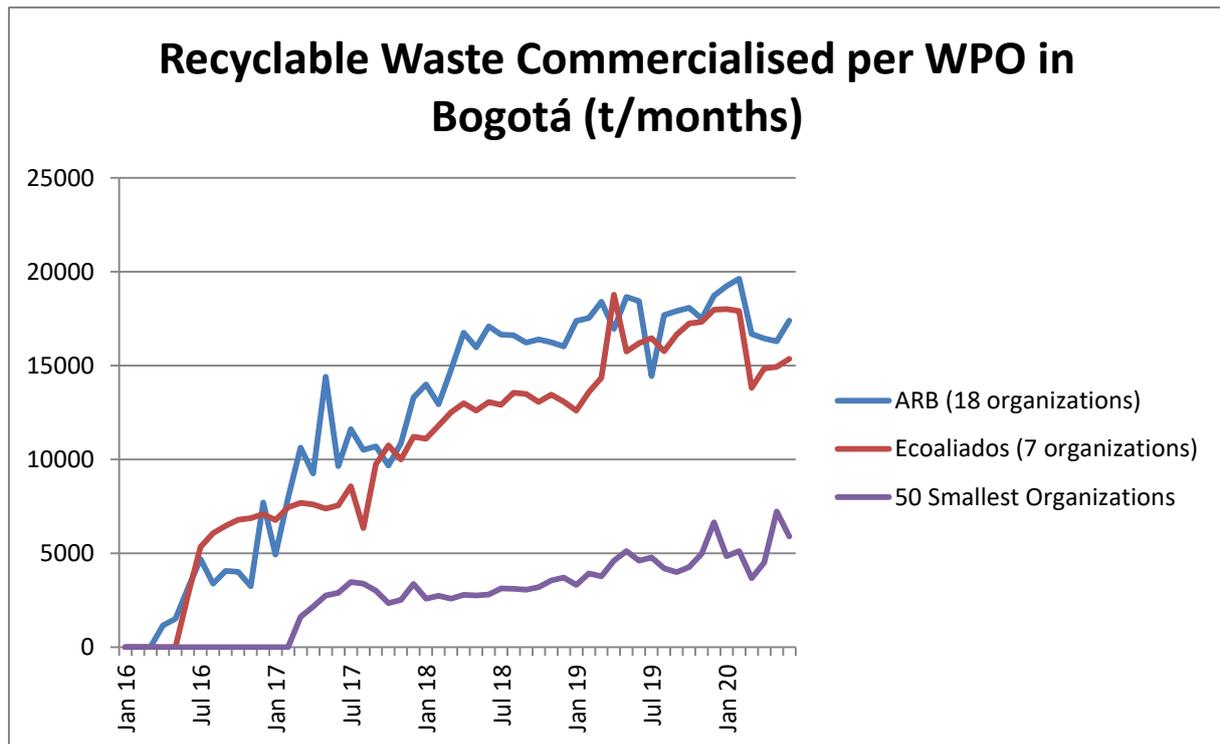


Figure 1. Comparison of the two largest second-level associations with the smallest 50 out of 150 organisations registered in June 2020. Own elaboration based on SSPD 2020.

Despite the transitory guarantee of waste pickers' exclusive access to waste, the threat of private competition remains present. Decree 596 provides several loopholes for private enterprises to enter the recycling market which has ironically become more lucrative due to the remuneration now available (Parra 2019b). In 2018, 60% of Bogotá's WPOs could not prove they consisted of waste pickers only (SSPD 2018, p. 16). This threat is amplified as the market is to be opened after the transition period, and there is no legal framework in place to regulate the post-transition period.

6. Findings

The interviews conducted with leaders from different waste picker organisations reveal a striking divide between two groups of organisations in the framing of their organisations, rights, and demands⁶. Correspondingly, it will be distinguished between "business-oriented organisations (BOOs)", which claimed their right to competing in regulated markets from services provided by their organisation, and "welfare-oriented organisations (WOOs)", which emphasised the state's responsibility to provide for its most vulnerable citizens.

⁶ This is illustrated by the coding spread in Appendix VI.

	BOOs						WOOs ¹					Averages	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	4	5	6	BOOs	WOOs
Likelihood of meeting formalization requirements (Scale 0-10)	10	8	5	8 ³	10	3	4	0	7	7,5	2 ³	7,3	4,1
Capacity of negotiating legal changes with the state (Scale 0-10)	10	9	9	8 ³	10	3	7	10	1	8,5	2 ³	8,2	5,4
Number of associates	27	90	30	70	70	40	52	103	100	84	145	61,0	108,0
Commercialised waste (t/month)	14 ²	540 ²	80 ²	1957	268	72	82	42	180	700 ²		488,5	307,3
Commercialised waste per associate (t/month)	0,5	6,0	2,7	28,0	3,8	1,8	1,6	0,4	1,8	8,3	N/A	3,6	2,6

¹ No data available for WOO3.

² Estimate by organisation

³ Own estimates based on interviews.

Table 2. Assessment of interviewed WPOs (own elaboration, data from interviews and SSPD 2020).

6.1. Business-oriented organisations

6.1.1. Organisational development: Professionalisation and exclusion

“As I say to my children, to my associates: Let’s not stay here, let’s move forward because we can!” (BOO3)⁷

BOOs characteristically rise to the exigencies of formalisation and free competition. On an organisational level, this was expressed by a strong will to progress by introducing professional management systems and staff, as well as regularizing waste pickers’ work. BOOs emphasised the need for compliance with formal procedures, economic diversification and upgrading by making management more efficient and processing new materials to grow successfully (BOO1-6). For example, one organisation set up a glass processing plant (BOO6) and one organisation shifted leadership to professional staff completely (BOO2). Two associations emphasised their co-operativist approach, building strong participatory and redistributive structures internally (BOO1; BOO5). Accordingly, BOOs were more confident about their political and economic capacities (Table 3).

This professionalisation creates a mechanism of exclusion towards those waste pickers who are not able or willing to subject their work to formalised schedules. Bogotá’s waste pickers’ reluctance to comply with “working hours and responsibilities”, as well as selling in one location, is well documented (BOO4; see also WOO1; WOO5; García 2011; Parra 2016; Rodríguez 2004). Moreover, homeless, drug-addicted, handicapped and elderly waste pickers may not be able to work inside a formalised regime. BOOs’ capacities to formalise seem to either stem from productivity increases

⁷ Own translations, original Spanish quotations are attached in Appendix I.

through economies of scale, confirming Tovar's (2018) argument; or through the use of pre-existing social structures based on friendships or family ties in small cohesive organisations (BOO1; BOO3; BOO5; BOO6). As no differences could be found regarding ethnic, class, educational, migration background or organisational age, it is likely that relative success stems from selecting waste pickers who are willing to restructure their work⁸.

BOOs saw making their organisations competitive as the only way to provide benefits to their associates (BOO1-6) and protect themselves against displacement (BOO2; BOO4-6). Operating under private competition was deemed inevitable in the long run:

"We know that from here onwards the big fish eats the small fish. And if we are not well organised and strengthened, the [private] waste operators will come and drag us out."
(BOO4)

6.1.2. Rights discourse: public service provision

BOOs adopt entrepreneurial discourses, claiming their right to inclusion through their provision of public services. They thus focus on the liberal part of the earlier argument for inclusion, tying their claim to rights to their organisational development. This reproduction of neoliberal governmentality relying on self-optimisation (Foucault 1991, p. 102) is seen as necessary to achieve recognition by the state and general public under neoliberal hegemony (Rosaldo 2018; Samson 2015b).

"If we weren't complying with the phases of the national decree [596], we wouldn't have an incidence. [...] So, as we have rights, we have responsibilities. If I [...] comply with everything required by the law, then I can fight. If you don't do anything, if you keep waiting, then no. That's why, as an organisation, we are the ones that must, with our own resources and our own [recyclable] material, see how we overcome, or we are screwed." (BOO6)

Focussing on their efficient service provision for the public good enables BOOs to claim collaboration. They present their demands as efficiency improving, creating mutually beneficial outcomes. For example, state monitoring should root out corruption, decreasing waste management costs (BOO1; BOO5). Increased source separation could increase waste pickers' productivity and recycling capacities (BOO2; BOO3; BOO6). This idea of 'doing a favour' to the public is highlighted by BOO1:

"We are providing a waste management service, [...] collecting recyclable waste for the benefit of the environment which is also a job we are doing in favour of the people whose rights are violated as they must pay high fees [...] from which only a few benefit who thereby damage both the waste picker population and the people in general." (BOO1)

⁸ Although plausible, data is lacking to assess whether these are also more productive/able-bodied waste pickers.

Similarly, professionalisation also constitutes a performative strategy to create the image of *professional businesses* to gain recognition by state, police and households. As BOO3 explained:

“We made the Youtube video so people would know us, and start committing to BOO3. That BOO3 is a company of honourable, hardworking people. And that they see that we're not what they think waste pickers are. So that they think we are organised people, and that we have a desire to move forward with this organisation.”
(BOO3)

This experience of BOO3 and BOO5 that re-defining themselves as professional workers enables waste pickers to collect more recyclables from households, negotiate arrangements with residential compounds and business, as well as protecting them from police harassment, has been observed in Bogotá and beyond (Navarrete-Hernández and Navarrete-Hernández 2018; Rosaldo 2018).

However, this neoliberal discourse of self-reliance undermines claims for the state to take responsibility for providing livelihoods, although the majority of WPOs remain economically unviable (Espinosa and Corredor 2017)⁹. As shown above, BOOs' promise to lift waste pickers out of poverty is highly exclusionary. This discourse exacerbates the marginality of waste pickers who cannot successfully formalise, and moralises over their poverty as personal failure (Rose 1996, 345-247), suggesting they are undeserving of support:

“We can do it, you can also do it. Only that you don't want to!” (BOO5)

Thus, when waste pickers fall behind in formalizing, they will not only face private enterprises but also a block of 'legitimate' waste pickers.

This process of distinction was especially marked towards the most marginal waste pickers: the homeless and migrants:

“Sometimes, [...] destitute and homeless people enter, for example Venezuelans, enter and rip bags apart, wreaking havoc. [...] So the police say to the Venezuelans: “Leave here, as this man provides the service here, who is from these organised waste pickers who have their ID and are authenticated by the authorities.” (BOO3)

Conclusively, BOOs' focus of solidarity shifts from waste pickers in general to their own associates. This exclusive framing has undoubtedly helped strengthen BOOs' organisational capacities and collective identity. However, this success erodes solidarity, excluding waste pickers outside their organisation from political struggles and benefits won. BOO1 only talks of his associates when saying:

“We will all contribute, we will all fight and if we win, we all win.” (BOO1)

⁹ BOO2 was an exception. Led by professional staff they state business development as organisational goal but emphasise the need for social support for all waste pickers.

6.1.3. Policy demands: regulated competition, co-ordination, and displacement

In line with their neoliberal discourse, BOOs call for the state to create a market for them through regulation (see Wacquant 2012, p. 72). Therefore, these organisations demand regulation of external competition and corruption to ensure fair competition (BOO1-6). Claims for direct support were only made in terms of temporary business development (BOO2; BOO5-6).

The majority of BOOs further demand the establishment of exclusive collection routes to foster their business development. These organisations (BOO2; BOO4-6) argued this would improve service coverage and efficiency. This has been confirmed by several studies, as regularised service provides an efficient use of machinery, closes gaps in coverage, and enables waste pickers to build relationships to households (Amador Cabra and Rubiano 2004; Barriga Chia 2018, pp. 108–110; Navarrete-Hernández and Navarrete-Hernández 2018). These routes could either result from inclusive co-ordination between WPOs (BOO5-6) or through public tenders (BOO2; BOO4).

However, many other WPOs fear this model to cause displacements, as waste would become private property. Thus, the *enclosure of the commons* feared under state-led formalisation would become reality under private competition. As BOO4 recognised, all waste pickers who are not part of successful organisations would lose access to their livelihoods:

BOO4: “When the routes are normalised and legalised, obviously the routes will displace many ‘floating’ waste pickers and that’s where the quarrels, the differences between waste pickers will emerge. That will come ahead, we can already see it coming.”

Interviewer: “And what will happen to those waste pickers who are ‘floating’ now?”

BOO4: “For us, that is clear. If they don’t adhere to an organisation which supports them and keeps them in the system, these waste pickers will disappear. [...] They will have to search for different work to do.”

6.2. Welfare-oriented organisations

6.2.1. Organisational development: care, inclusion, lacking capacities

“It is not only for us as representatives to expect them [to deliver], but they also expect us to lead the way and accompany them in their daily lives.” (WOO6)

WOOs emphasised their role in caring for vulnerable waste pickers. Rather than developing management practices and transforming waste pickers work, WOO leaders described their task as gathering support for waste pickers’ current practices. For example, leadership tasks were described as helping waste pickers in their everyday work, representing them in policy forums, mobilising for

protests and gathering external support for the organisation (WOO1; WOO5; WOO6¹⁰). WOOs emphasised their members' vulnerability, highlighting the presence of single mothers, elderly and handicapped people in their organisations (WOO1; WOO2; WOO6).

This organisational inclusivity is accompanied by deficient economic capacities and doubts about formalising successfully. For example, several WOOs claimed lacking resources for employing sufficient professional staff (WOO1; WOO2; WOO5). Other leaders showed frustration about the lack of members' commitment to invest in the strengthening of their organisation, joining the association solely for fee payments (WOO1; WOO5):

"They don't have a sense of [...] 'I belong here and I stay here. [...] What I gain here is what I do here and what I use here'. The waste picker doesn't have that. He is only here because it suits him, but as soon as it doesn't suit him he goes somewhere else where they offer him something better." (WOO5)

WOOs demonstrated varying assessments of their political capacities. WOO1 and WOO5 were experienced activists of Colombia's waste picker movement, WOO2-4 had founded a second-level association to advocate 'social issues', WOO6 lacked confidence in political processes. This variety of organisational experience suggests that, for some organisations, the inclusive approach was a conscious decision. In fact, WOO1 and WOO2 stated that the presence of vulnerable waste pickers motivated them to join their organisations.

6.2.2. Rights discourse: vulnerability and state responsibility

In their interviews, WOOs concentrated on the social side of earlier waste pickers' discourses, highlighting their vulnerability to claim a moral right to the provision of their 'mínimo vital' (basic livelihood). Importantly, this claim is unconditional, rejecting the meritocratic rights discourse presented by BOOs. Most organisations (WOO2-6) moved beyond this humanitarian imperative, expecting the state to comprehensively cover their livelihoods:

"[We formed a second-level association) because we had different ideas: that the waste pickers, their family, their work, their health, their education come first; not entrepreneurial gain." (WOO4).

As this vulnerability-based rights discourse is solely conditional on deprivation, it allows for the inclusion of poor populations beyond organisational boundaries. WOOs variously emphasised the importance of all waste pickers, irrespective of their social or organisational status (WOO1-5). This is

¹⁰ WOO3 and WOO4 were only interviewed in group with WOO2 (who was also interviewed separately).

of particular importance for the most marginal groups who have no chance of adapting to new organisational rhythms, including homeless people, migrants or elderly waste pickers.

“They never were tired of [...] fighting for all comrades no matter their age, skin colour or origin. What matters is that we are all stuck in this occupation and we are all people whom we must value.” (WOO3)¹¹

This discourse of social rights positions WOOs antagonistically towards the state. By claiming state responsibilities to provide for the poor, they challenge neoliberal statehood and emphasise its deficiencies in caring for its citizens (see Rose 1996; Wacquant 2012). Correspondingly, WOOs depicted the state as either actively attempting to displace waste pickers or unwilling to actively support them. The state was perceived as unresponsive and corrupt, representing business interests alone (WOO1-6). This mistrust and fear is best captured by the representative of WOO1:

“Colombia is a country in which anything happens and nothing happens... They know where the bullets come from but they don’t know who is silent, sometimes hushed so as not to generate expectations of interest or military objectives of the state. The state - which above all also has its interests because there are also some big businesspeople inside the government.” (WOO1)

This framing is likely to further marginalise WOOs’ politically, as it is incompatible with neoliberal discourses propelled by the state and many NGOs (Samson 2015b). Despite accepting waste pickers’ formalisation under free competition, WOOs challenge the logic and interests of the neoliberal state by demanding redistributive and social policies. Facing a repressive state in which hundreds of activists are murdered annually (El Espectador 2020) with little support from broader social and political movements, this strategy is challenging to say the least. However, for many waste pickers who cannot compete in the market-based model this path may be the only viable alternative. The fact that some WOOs possess major political experience may increase hopes that a strategy of broader social transformation is possible.

6.2.3. Policy demands: state support for unregulated work

Building on their claims for social rights, WOOs demanded that the state provide direct support for waste pickers’ livelihoods and businesses. WOOs broaden the discussed terms of inclusion by demanding welfare benefits, ranging from food support in times of crisis (WOO3; WOO6), to labour insurance granted by the state, as well as a reform of the health and education system (WOO2-4).

¹¹ Attempts to bridge frames towards non-waste pickers were only tentatively made across WPOs (BOO5-6; WOO1-2), confirming waste pickers’ framing as separate (Rosaldo 2018).

Furthermore, all WOOs demanded the state support for their associations to formalise, increase and stabilise their incomes. Besides calls for support through machinery, vehicles and warehouses, these included long-term contracts with the state to enable access to credit, regulation of market prices for recycled materials and increases in fee payments. As WOOs did not see themselves as capable of complying with the requirements for formalisation, they further demanded an alleviation of the regulatory and tax burden experienced (WOO1-6). WOO2 put it this way:

“As the court ruling said we must turn into an enterprise but progressively. Not, make us become an enterprise at once; [...] progressively with all affirmative actions. We must overcome being vulnerable. Waste pickers will depend on a salary and be paid their benefits, everything by law, but progressively, with all affirmative actions.” (WOO2)

Or more bluntly:

“Every day they [the state] are requiring more things and more things and we can’t. Sometimes we get tired and say: ‘We won’t be able to comply with this.’” (WOO6)

WOOs demanded continued free competition amongst waste pickers to maintain their current working practices and avoid displacements. WOO2 explains:

“[Exclusive routes] displace many waste pickers. Not so much those who are formalised in an organisation but the independent waste pickers. They depend on their work [...], their daily labour [...]. But if a person comes and takes an exclusive route, he will be the owner of this route and have the right to the [recyclable] material and otherwise no-one. And we are 100% against those exclusive routes.” (WOO2)

As many waste pickers share collection routes, displacements would be inevitable even when incorporating unorganised waste pickers (BOO3; WOO5). Moreover, these measures extend state control over waste pickers, enabling routes to be granted to private enterprises (WOO2; WOO4; WOO6). In demanding free competition among waste pickers, WOOs insisted that the state prevent their dispossession by creating *inclusive* recycling systems - thus remaining closer to the original inclusion model under Petro (Parra 2015; Rosaldo 2019).

6.3. Causes of divisions: formalising as enterprises

This section discusses the ways in which economic inclusion has exacerbated the divisions between WPOs, leading to the diverging discourses outlined above and widespread mistrust between WPOs. Since formalisation was conceived as a competitive process of business development under constant threat of dispossession, it has undermined the creation of collective action frames and identities, fragmenting Bogotá’s waste picker movement.

There was general agreement between all WPOs interviewed on the ongoing importance of political struggles to create benefits for waste pickers:

“What we have won was through struggle, sacrifice. From putting our hand in the rubbish, leaving the bin, [moving] to the Senate and the streets to protest. We cannot wait and see what presents the state gives, it has never given us anything.” (WOO1)

Rights were understood as having been actively won rather than being universal. As Rosaldo (2018, p. 145) argues, waste pickers ‘grafted’ their rights by problematising their situation through performative strategies. However, mistrust and divisions between WPOs were highlighted by all waste pickers interviewed.

Foremost, mistrust amongst WPOs originates from the competitive pressures governing their labour. The race to formalisation triggered by Decree 596 pits WPOs against each other, leading them to prioritise individual organisational needs and creating material inequalities between organisations. WPOs in particular accused successful organisations of formalising “at the cost of others”, appropriating external support and displacing marginalised waste pickers (WOO2). Private benefits distributed through markets contrast the collective labour of political struggles:

“There is a situation in which organisation X says to me: ‘I will cover and strengthen you but a percentage of your fee income stays here’. [...] They are almost charging me for participating. But when they call for demonstrations, I don’t charge them. For throwing stones and protesting, I don’t charge them.” (WOO1)

The state was accused of perpetuating these inequalities by selectively inviting WPOs to meetings (WOO1; WOO5; BOO2), providing support (BOO2-3; WOO6), and publishing tenders for waste collection (WOO2; WOO5). Inequalities were highlighted in all interviews, framed as either a strategy to sow divisions amongst WPOs (WOO1; WOO2), as clientelist politics (BOO5; WOO2-3; WOO5) or as a bias towards organisations possessing the resources to access the state (BOO2; WOO6).

Acting under constant fear of displacement through private or state power has deepened mistrust between organisations. WPOs claimed organisations were bought for votes (BOO5; WOO2; WOO3; WOO5) or by private enterprises (BOO1; BOO3; WOO1-2; WOO5-6). These threats seemed credible due to the state’s history of corruption and non-compliance (Rosaldo 2018, pp. 97–99), increased profitability through fee payments, and legal loopholes which enable the entry of private actors (Parra 2019b). Thus, the threat of displacement which drove waste pickers’ organising now divides these organisations.

Corruption and divisions through exploitative WPOs were perceived as a further problem, exacerbated by waste pickers' continued individualist work patterns, looking for short-term benefits rather than long-term organisation. This alleged ignorance was linked to apprehension of WPO leaders exploiting their associates to appropriate fee payments (BOO2-6; WOO2; WOO4-5) and the spread of wrong accusations towards WPOs (WOO1; WOO5; BOO6).

Given their movement history, waste pickers lack the spaces for collective identity building which could counteract this fragmentation. The early importance of NGO programmes led to a focus of waste pickers organising in self-reliant co-operatives (Rodriguez 2004, p. 39). Politically, these organisations were connected by a framing as enterprises looking to compete (Rosaldo 2016; Samson 2015b). WOO1 described early debates inside the National Waste Pickers' Association (ANR):

"We asked: 'What will our organisation be? Will it be an occupational organisation? Will it be political? Will it be an economic organisation? Or will it be an environmental organisation?' [...] But today the subject is economic. [...] The social got left behind and the environmental, too." (WOO1)

This strategy resulted in the strengthening of organisational and economic capacities in few WPOs with NGO support. However, newly formed co-operatives are left to formalise rapidly and individually without such support (MinVivienda 2016, p. 15; Parra 2019a, p. 283).

Conversely, WPOs neglected the integration of waste pickers into a broad political movement by creating collective action frames and identities. Constructing a common identity, purpose and pathway of action is essential to unifying movements but requires building emotional ties, symbols and rituals between all waste pickers (Flesher Fominaya 2010, p. 396). The importance of protests, internal debates and participatory platforms to create collective identities, legitimise leadership, and build organisational structures has been highlighted for older WPOs in Bogotá (Barriga Chía 2016; García 2011, pp. 274–276; Rodriguez 2004, pp. 32–37). However, creating these spaces of participation and solidarity-building are neither part of formalisation nor were they demanded by WPOs in the interviews. This explains BOO2's frustration:

"The majority of waste pickers has no political vision [...] of 'Let's organise in this form!' They do it because the government asks them to and because they can gain something. But nothing else." (BOO2)

7. Conclusion

This dissertation argues that the current formalisation of Bogotá's waste pickers creates divisions among the city's waste pickers, obstructing claims for decent work for all and potentially displacing the most vulnerable. As formalisation was conceived as business development through free

competition, it has encouraged organisations to prioritise their own professionalisation over the construction of inclusive collective action frames. As the required re-structuring of work and organisation is unfeasible for most waste pickers under current conditions, economic inclusion remains exclusive. Many waste pickers are thus further marginalised economically and politically. As waste pickers have neglected constructing collective identities between all waste pickers they have not been able to counter the divisive tendencies invoked by competition and threats of displacement.

Interviews exposed two opposing narratives. On the one hand, business-oriented organisations drew legitimacy from neoliberal discourses focussing on service provision through their own organisations. Consequently, they cut bonds towards waste pickers who fail to achieve rapid formalisation. This results in a rejection of state support and support of exclusive collection routes, potentially leading to the dispossession of many waste pickers. In contrast, welfare-oriented organisations appeal to the state's moral responsibility to care for the most vulnerable waste pickers, both within and outside their organisations. However, these organisations struggle economically and politically, possibly due to their inclusivity impeding rapid professionalisation and their framing conflicting with prevailing state discourses.

These results invite caution when judging the initial successes of Bogotá's market-based model of waste picker inclusion or presenting it as a general role model for bottom-up inclusion. Constrained by a predominantly repressive and neoliberal political environment, Bogotá's waste pickers opted for formalisation based exclusively on their right to compete amongst each other. This framing impeded inclusive collective identity building as a political movement, and created competitive pressures leading to internal divisions. The experienced obstruction of waste picker inclusion by state agencies highlights the need for collective action towards inclusive and redistributive politics, beyond neoliberal frames.

Nevertheless, Bogotá's waste pickers' situation has improved since their initial judicial victories. Waste pickers have (temporarily) increased their incomes, more waste pickers are organised and some WPOs have built professionalised economic and political apparatuses. As waste pickers face renewed political struggles after transitioning into 'formality', they need to reaffirm their constitutional protection, and refocus on building collective identities and solidarity between all waste pickers. This is the path ahead as seen by WOO5:

"Firstly: Defend what was won. Secondly, we must win more because we lead this struggle to win many more things. We didn't get this far so that others could reap the benefit. We must continue the struggle and win many more things."

To confirm the results of this explorative research, further investigation into waste pickers' discursive practices, organisational composition, and movement building is necessary. To properly understand the possibilities of broad-based inclusion, it is important to continue moving away from solely examining the practices of the most successful organisation and further investigate the realities of unorganised waste pickers and the barriers to formalisation they experience. Similarly, the interrogation of waste pickers' operational practices may give insights into the ways in which everyday practices impact productivity, internal redistribution and exclusion. Finally, it would be worthwhile to shift the focus towards existing social and political movements in Colombia to fully understand the possibilities and limitations of creating new alliances.

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Appendix I – Translations

Acknowledgements

<p>“[Waste pickers] are warriors. We are warriors because that’s why we are there. [...] We stand firm and haven’t kept waiting to receive some collaboration or help because of the pandemic. No, we have gone out there to complete our daily labour of recycling, we have put our hands in the waste, we have been in the sun and the ware. That’s what it means to be a warrior in life.” (WOO6)</p>	<p>Son unos guerreros, somos guerreros porque ahí estamos por eso, como te decía, estamos firmes y no nos hemos quedado que por la pandemia esperando que nos llegue una colaboración o una ayuda, no, nosotros hemos salido el día a día a reciclar, le hemos metido las manos a la basura, hemos estado en el sol y en el agua, entonces eso es ser guerrero en la vida. (WOO6)</p>
<p>“A waste picker lives with, lives from and takes from the waste. That’s a waste picker.” (WOO5)</p>	<p>El reciclador de oficio convive, vive y lleva de la basura. Esto es un reciclador de oficio. (WOO5)</p>

Business-oriented organisations

<p>“As I say to my children, to my associates: Let’s not stay here, let’s move forward because we can!” (BOO3)</p>	<p>A esto mismo también digo yo a mis hijos, a los socios: Que vean no nos quedemos acá, salgamos adelante que lo podemos. (WOO3)</p>
<p>“We know that from here onwards the big fish eats the small fish. And if we are not well organised and strengthened, the [private] waste operators will come and drag us out.” (BOO4)</p>	<p>Nosotros sabemos que de aquí para arriba el pez gordo es el que se come al pez chico, y si nosotros no estamos bien organizados y bien fortalecidos vienen los operadores de aseo y nos arrastran. (BOO4)</p>
<p>“If we weren’t complying with the phases of the national decree [596], we wouldn’t have an incidence. [...] So, as we have rights, we have responsibilities. If I [...] comply with everything required by the law, then I can fight. If you don’t do anything, if you keep waiting, then no. That’s why, as an organisation, we are the ones that must, with our own resources and our own [recyclable] material, see how we overcome, or we are screwed.” (BOO6)</p>	<p>Si nosotros no estuviéramos cumpliendo con las fases del decreto nacional, nosotros no tendríamos incidencia. Porque si tú cumples, te quedas; si no cumples, sales. Entonces, así como nosotros tenemos derechos, tenemos deberes, y si quiero ir avanzando en mis propuestas sociales y de política pública y cumplir con todo lo que a mí me manda la normatividad, de igual manera pues yo puedo pelear. Si tú no haces nada, si tu te quedas esperando (pues no), por eso nosotros somos una organización, porque nosotros mismos tenemos que, de nuestros recursos y de nuestro material, mirar cómo podemos sobresalir, o sino nosotros estamos jodidos (BOO6)</p>
<p>“We are providing a waste management service, [...] collecting recyclable waste for the benefit of the environment which is also a job we are doing in favour of the people whose rights are violated as they must pay high fees [...] from which only a few benefit who thereby damage both the waste picker population and the people in general.” (BOO1)</p>	<p>Lo que nosotros estamos haciendo es prestar un servicio de aseo, hacer un trabajo en beneficio del medio ambiente de recolección de residuos aprovechables, que es también un trabajo que estamos haciendo en favor del pueblo a que no se le vulnere el derecho de cobrarle una tarifa alta de que cuando verdaderamente no tiene que pagar una tarifa que unos pocos aprovechan haciendo la corrupción y el daño para afectar tanto a la población</p>

	recicladora como el pueblo en general. (BOO1)
“We made the Youtube video so people would know us, and start committing to BOO3. That BOO3 is a company of honourable, hardworking people. And that they see that we're not what they think waste pickers are. So that they think we are organised people, and that we have a desire to move forward with this organisation.” (BOO3)	El video fue en el Youtube para que la gente nos conociera, que empezaran a comer a BOO3. Que BOO3 es una compañía que son personas honoradas, personas trabajadoras. Y que miraren que verdaderamente no somos que piensan que son los recicladores. Que piensen que somos unas personas organizadas, y que tenemos deseo de salir adelante con esa organización. (BOO3)
“Sometimes, [...] destitute and homeless people enter, for example Venezuelans, enter and rip bags apart, wreaking havoc. [...] So the police say to the Venezuelans: “Leave here, as this man provides the service here, who is from these organised waste pickers who have their ID and are authenticated by the authorities.” (BOO3)	A veces llegan a entrar, a mirarlo como lo dije yo de indigentes y de la calle, por ejemplo los Venezolanos, entran y rompen bolsas, a hacer destragos. Entonces la policía dice que no venga aquí un ratico. Pues ya la policía a los Venezolanos dice que vayanse de acá que aquí presta el servicio el hombre de estos recicladores organizados que están con su carnet y que ya están autenticado por la autoridades. (BOO3)
“We will all contribute, we will all fight and if we win, we all win.” (BOO1)	Todos vamos a poner, todos vamos a luchar y todos si ganamos, ganamos todos (BOO1)
<p>BOO4: “When the routes are normalised and legalised, obviously the routes will displace many ‘floating’ waste pickers and that's where the quarrels, the differences between waste pickers will emerge. That will come ahead, we can already see it coming.”</p> <p>Interviewer: “And what will happen to those waste pickers who are ‘floating’ now?”</p> <p>BOO4: “For us, that is clear. If they don’t adhere to an organisation which supports them and keeps them in the system, these waste pickers will disappear. [...] They will have to search for different work to do.”</p>	<p>“Más adelante va a ser por las rutas. Claro, porque ahorita pasa la ruta de una organización, pero pasa el reciclador flotante, pasa el reciclador de otra organización más adelante, ¿sí me hago entender? Cuando ya se normalicen y se legalicen las rutas, obvio, las rutas van a sacar a mucho reciclador flotante y ahí si van a empezar como las riñas, las diferencias entre los mismos recicladores. Eso se va a venir más adelante, nosotros ya miramos que eso se viene.</p> <p>Claro. Y, ¿qué pasará con esos recicladores que ahora son flotantes?</p> <p>Pues si ellos no... eso sí lo tenemos claro, si ellos no se adhieren a alguna organización para que lo respalden y estén dentro del sistema, ese reciclador tiene a desaparecer. O sea, desaparecer en la labor, ¿no? (risas). En la labor, ahí ya pues buscará otra labor que hacer. (W4)”</p>

Welfare-oriented organisations

“It is not only for us as representatives to expect them [to deliver], but they also expect us to lead the way and accompany them in their daily lives.” (WOO6)	Entonces nos ha tocado no solamente como representantes esperar de ellos, sino ellos también esperan de nosotros que salgamos adelante y que los estemos acompañando ahí en el día a día también de ello. (WOO6)
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<p>"They don't have a sense of [...] 'I belong here and I stay here. [...] What I gain here is what I do here and what I use here'. The waste picker doesn't have that. He is only here because it suits him, but as soon as it doesn't suit him he goes somewhere else where they offer him something better." (WOO5)</p>	<p>Porque ellos no tienen sentido de pertenencia de que yo pertenezco de acá y yo me quedo acá. Y no le hace que lo que gano acá es lo que hago acá y lo que uso acá. El reciclador no tiene esto. El unicamente está acá porque le conviene pero si en el momento en que no le convenga se va por otro lado donde lo ofrezcan algo mejor (WOO5)</p>
<p>"[We formed a second-level association) because we had different ideas: that the waste pickers, their family, their work, their health, their education come first; not entrepreneurial gain." (WOO4).</p>	<p>Entonces a nosotros, porque nosotros teníamos unas ideas diferentes de que primero están los recicladores, la vida familiar, la vida de trabajo, la vida de salud, la vida de educación de ellos que pues por el bien empresario (WOO4)</p>
<p><i>"They never were tired of [...] fighting for all comrades no matter their age, skin colour or origin. What matters is that we are all stuck in this occupation and we are all people whom we must value." (WOO3)</i></p>	<p>Nunca se han cansado de luchar por el reciclaje, luchar por el medio ambiente y luchar por todos los compañeros sin importar cuántos años tienen y color de raza o de dónde son tampoco si no, lo importante es que todas las personas que estamos metidos en este oficio y que son las personas que debemos valorar. Pero como vuelvo y lo repito, eso no es lo que al Estado Colombiano legisló. A ellos solamente les interesa el dinero. (WOO3)</p>
<p>"Colombia is a country in which anything happens and nothing happens... They know where the bullets come from but they don't know who is silent, sometimes hushed so as not to generate expectations of interest or military objectives of the state. The state - which above all also has its interests because there are also some big businesspeople inside the government." (WOO1)</p>	<p>Colombia es un país donde pasa de todo y no pasa nada... saben de donde vienen las balas pero no saben quiénes están silenciosos ahí, a veces calladitos para no ir a generar expectativa de interés o de objetivo militar del Estado, del Estado sobre todo, que es el que también tiene sus intereses porque también hay algunos empresarios grandes dentro del mismo gobierno. (WOO1)</p>
<p>"As the court ruling said we must turn into an enterprise but progressively. Not, make us become an enterprise at once; [...] progressively with all affirmative actions. We must overcome being vulnerable. Waste pickers will depend on a salary and be paid their benefits, everything by law, but progressively, with all affirmative actions." (WOO2)</p>	<p>Nosotros como lo dijo el mismo auto, lo digo nosotros tenemos que ser empresa, pero progresivamente. No, como dicen por ahí á trancaso mandarnos como empresa. O sea de hoy a mañana tengo que ser empresario. no. Nosotros como el Auto dice progresivamente con todas las acciones afirmativas. Nosotros tenemos que salir de ser vulnerables. O sea ya los recicladores ya dependerán de un sueldo ya se les pagará su pesantía, sus prestaciones, todo lo de ley, pero progresivamente,</p>

	con todas las acciones afirmativas (WOO2)
“Every day they [the state] are requiring more things and more things and we can’t. Sometimes we get tired and say: ‘We won’t be able to comply with this.’” (WOO6)	“Entonces, pero ahorita nos están exigiendo cada día más cosas y más cosas que no podemos, a veces nos cansamos y como que decimos: “No vamos a poder cumplir eso”.” (L6)
“[Exclusive routes] displace many waste pickers. Not so much those who are formalised in an organisation but the independent waste pickers. They depend on their work [...], their daily labour [...]. But if a person comes and takes an exclusive route, he will be the owner of this route and have the right to the [recyclable] material and otherwise no-one. And we are 100% against those exclusive routes.” (WOO2)	Desplazan a muchos recicladores, no tanto a los recicladores que estan formalizados que están en una organización, sino al reciclador independiente. [...]Ellos dependen de su trabajo, me entiendes? ellos dependen de su labor diaria, en su día a día. Pero si llega una persona, que coge una ruta exclusiva, pues es el dueño de la ruta y luego tiene derecho a recibir lo material y más nadie. Y nosotros estamos en contra 100 por ciento de la ruta exclusiva. (WOO2)

Causes of Divisions

“What we have won was through struggle, sacrifice. From putting our hand in the rubbish, leaving the bin, [moving] to the Senate and the streets to protest. We cannot wait and see what presents the state gives, it has never given us anything.” (WOO1)	No, nosotros lo que nos hemos ganado ha sido a punta de lucha, de sacrificio, de meter la mano en la basura, salir de la caneca al senado a protestar y a las calles, no ponernos a ver qué regala el Estado, nunca nos ha regalado nada. (WOO1)
“There is a situation in which organisation X says to me: ‘I will cover and strengthen you but a percentage of your fee income stays here’. [...] They are almost charging me for participating. But when they call for demonstrations, I don’t charge them. For throwing stones and protesting, I don’t charge them.” (WOO1)	O sea, hay una situación de una organización X que me decía “bueno, yo los cobijo a ustedes, los fortalezco, pero el tanto por ciento de sus ingresos por la tarifa se queda acá”, entonces uno dice bueno, o sea, casi que me están cobrando la participación, pero cuando demandan a marchas yo no cobro, a tirar piedras y a protestar yo no cobro, pero bueno, uno ve que una cosa contradice a la otra, bueno, estamos unidos en eso. (L1)
“We asked: ‘What will our organisation be? Will it be an occupational organisation? Will it be political? Will it be an economic organisation? Or will it be an environmental organisation?’ [...] But today the subject is economic. [...] The social got left behind and the environmental, too.” (WOO1)	Nosotros éramos, “bueno, ¿nuestra organización que va a ser? ¿va ser una organización gremial? ¿va a ser política? ¿va a ser una organización económica? ¿o va a ser una organización ambiental? Eso fue una lucha para identificar el sujeto de la organización [...]. Pero hoy en día el sujeto es económico; la tarifa, y yo peleo por la tarifa y el kilito y la organización que más material facture y eso, en fin, lo social quedó en un

	segundo plano y lo ambiental también quedó en un segundo plano. (WOO1)
“The majority of waste pickers has no political vision [...] of ‘Let’s organise in this form!’ They do it because the government asks them to and because they can gain something. But nothing else.” (BOO2)	Es más, la mayoría de los recicladores ni siquiera tiene una búsqueda política, una búsqueda de “¡Venga! Organicémonos de tal forma”. Lo hacen porque lo está pidiendo el gobierno y porque tienen que garantizar ganar algo, pero ya, no más. (BOO2)

Conclusion

“Firstly: Defend what was won. Secondly, we must win more because we lead this struggle to win many more things. We didn’t get this far so that others could reap the benefit. We must continue the struggle and win many more things.” (WOO5)	Esto es lo primero: Defender lo que se ha ganado. Segundo, hay que ganar más porque si llevamos la lucha para ganar muchas más cosas. No que hacemos hasta acá para que hagan a otros que pueden sacar los beneficios. Hay que seguir en la lucha y ganar muchas más cosas. (WOO5)
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Appendix II – Eight Phases of Transition

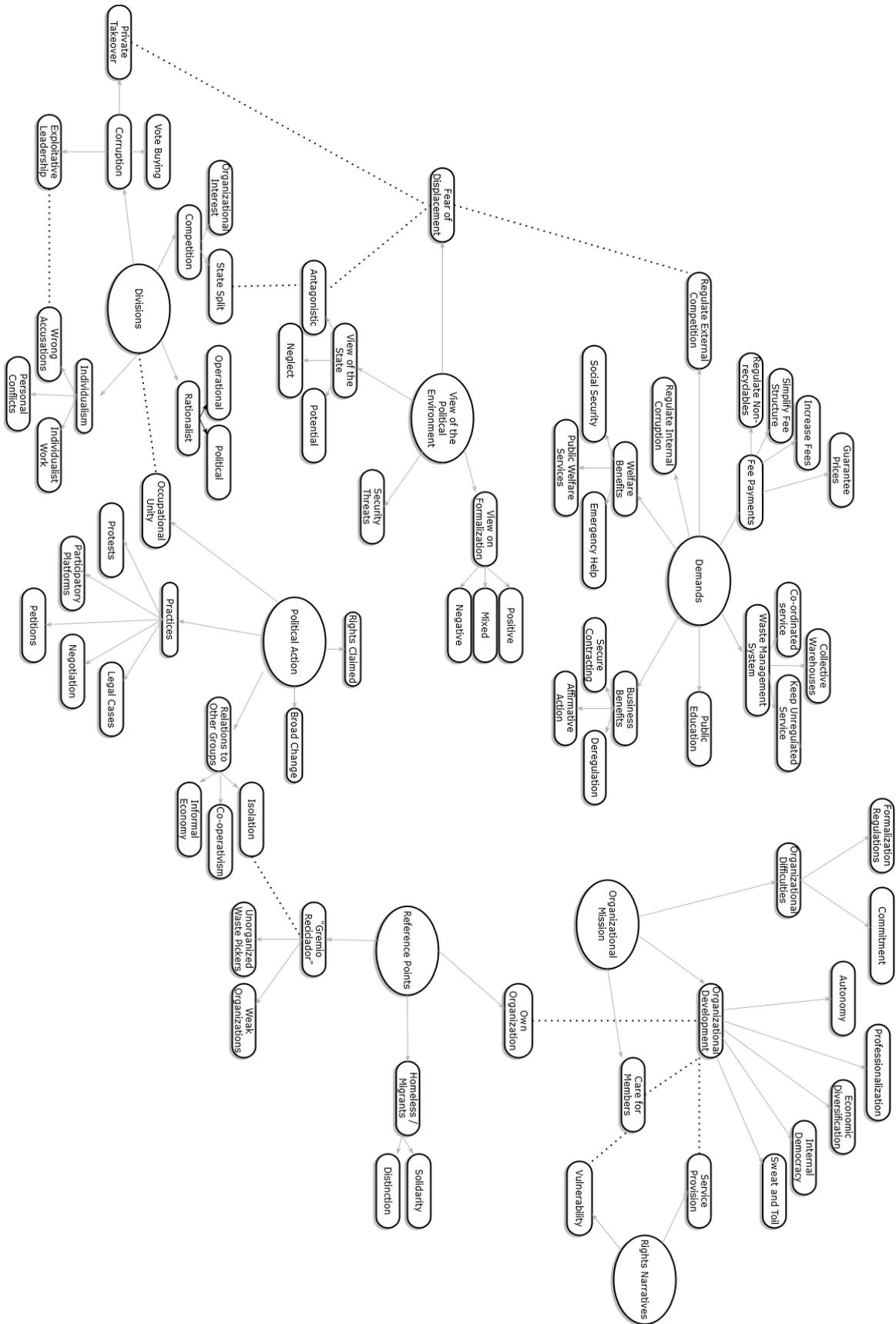
Phase	ASPECT
Phase 1 (Registration)	Registration as service provider in RUPS database
Phase 2 (First month)	Registration of area of service provision, collected and commercialized waste, vehicles, and warehouses
Phase 3 (Second month)	Publication terms and conditions of service provision
Phase 4 (First year)	Provision of a portfolio of services, business plan, user data base, and website
Phase 5 (Second year)	Calibration of scales in warehouses
	Establishment of controlling systems

	Plan on provision of services
Phase 6 (Third year)	Categorization of employees
	Definition of collection routes
	Certification of labour qualification
Phase 7 (Fourth year)	Registration of customer service and complaint mechanisms (PQR)
	Emergency and contingency plans
Phase 8 (Fifth year)	Financial information*
	Map area of service provision in MAGNA-SIRGAS database

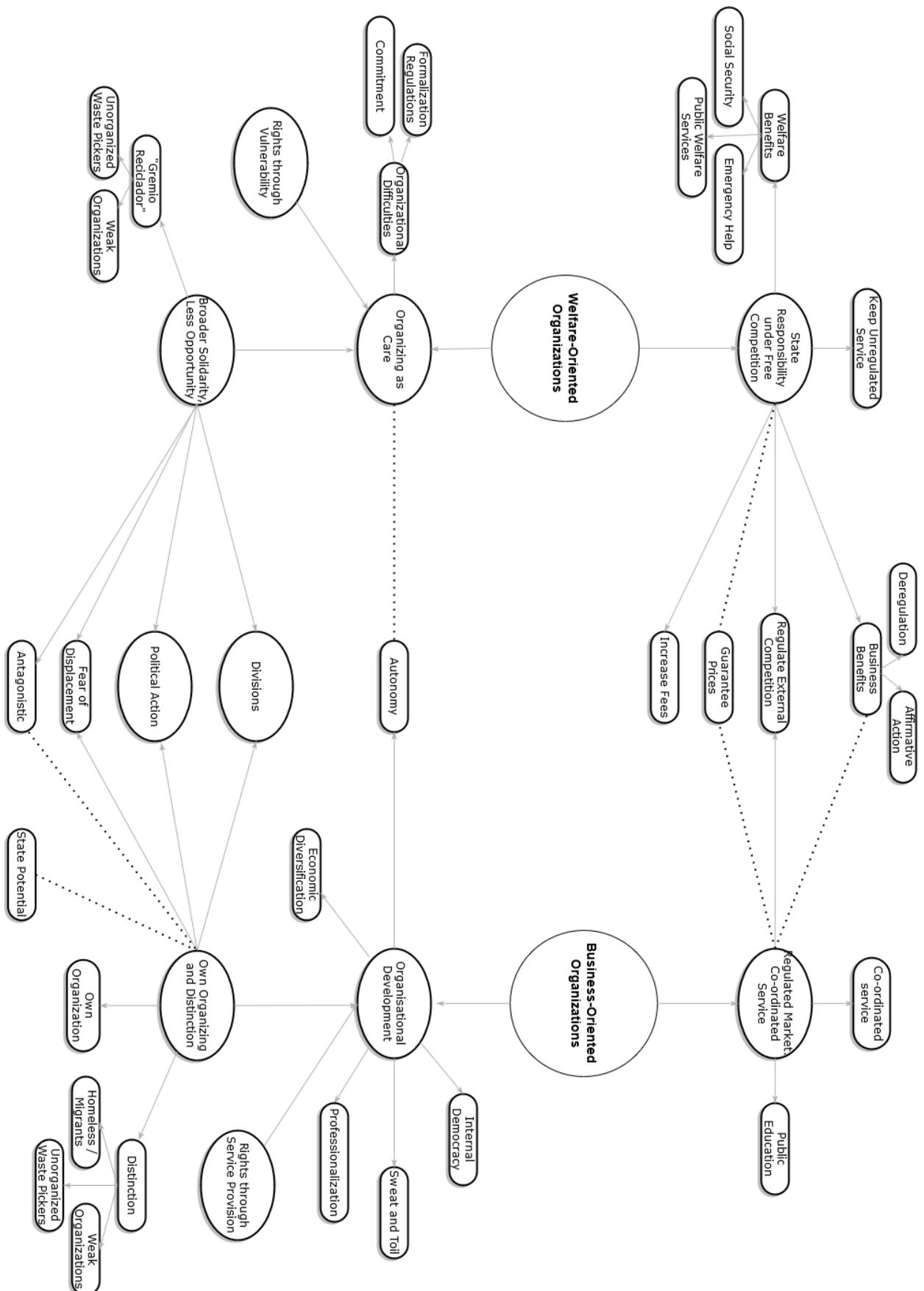
* This point requires WPOs to be financially viable, including the payment of labour and pension insurances to waste pickers.

Phases of formalisation outlined in Decree 596. Own elaboration based on (SSPD 2018).

Appendix III – Final Theme Network



Appendix IV – Themes by WPO Discourses



Appendix V – Code Book

Name	Description
Demands	Demands made by WPOs.
Business Benefits	Demands for state support for WPOs in terms of business development, i.e. improving productive capacities / profitability.
Deregulate	Decrease regulatory burden demanded by Decree 596.
Secure Contracting	Provision of long-term contracts by the state to guarantee access to credit and investment security.
Participation	Demands for more inclusion of waste pickers in participatory process (did not occur in interviews).
Public Education	Demands for the state to improve public education on source separation to improve material quality.
Regulate External Competition	Demands for the state to ensure actors others than waste pickers cannot enter the recycling market.
Regulate Internal Corruption	Demands for the state to monitor and enforce sanctions against corrupt WPOs.
Revise Fee System	Demands to revise the system of waste management fees.
Increase Fees	Provision of long-term contracts by the state to guarantee access to credit and investment security.
Guarantee Prices	Guarantee prices for recyclable materials to limit fluctuation in waste picker livelihoods.
Simplify Fee Structure	Eradicate restrictions on the commercialization of certain materials.
Regulate Non-Recyclables	Change payment system for operators of non-recyclable waste to improve efficiency.
Waste Management System	Demands concerning the long-term structure of waste picker operations.
Keep Unregulated	Waste pickers should continue to collect recyclable materials under

Name	Description
Service	free competition.
Co-ordinated Service	Waste pickers should be organised along exclusive collection routes.
Collective warehouses	Waste pickers should operate warehouses collectively where all material is sorted.
Welfare benefits	Demands for the state to provide directly for waste pickers livelihoods.
Social Security	Improve access to social security for waste pickers.
Public Welfare Services	Provide access to basic public services, e.g. health, education and housing.
Emergency Help	Support for waste pickers during crisis, e.g. food.
Divisions	References to divisions between WPOs.
Competition	Divisions grounded in competition between WPOs.
Organisational Interest	WPOs pursuing own interest rather than collective benefit, e.g. appropriating/ not sharing resources
State Split	Political or material inequalities between WPOs exacerbated by state action, un-/willingly
Corruption	Divisions created through corruption in WPOs.
Exploitative Leadership	WPO leaders pursuing private interests through WPOs, e.g. appropriating fee payments.
Private Takeover	WPOs being corrupted by private (profit) or state (political) interests.
Vote Buying	WPOs receive benefits in return for votes for certain politicians.
Individualism	Divisions created through individualist practices of waste pickers, focussed on short term benefits.
Individualist Work	Waste pickers do not commit to organisations, understand the benefit of organising, or are willing to abandon individualist work practices.

Name	Description
Personal Conflicts	Persistent personal conflicts between WPO leaders creating divisions.
Wrong Accusations	WPOs are wrongly accused of exploitation, either to win over waste pickers or as by-product of individualism.
Rationalist	Divisions created through diverging interests.
Operational	Different organisational patterns/preferences inhibit unified work of WPOs.
Political	Different political affiliations of WPOs.
Organisational Mission	Narratives around waste pickers' organisations.
Care for Members	Organisational aim described as taking care of associates.
Organisational Development	References to moving forward with one's organisation.
Autonomy	Importance of organisational independence.
Economic Diversification	Move organisations into new productive activities, e.g. recycling materials themselves, diversify materials.
Internal Democracy	Fortification of democratic structures inside organisation.
Professionalisation	Establishment of managerial and administrative practices inside the organisation.
Sweat and Toil	Strengthening the organisation through hard labour of associates.
Organisational Difficulties	References to difficulties to progress as organisation.
Formalisation Regulations	Struggle with compliance of legal requirements.
Commitment	Issues with associates' commitment to contribute to the organisation.
Political Action	References to political activities and their importance to waste pickers.

Name	Description
Broad Change	Need for wider societal change to improve waste pickers' situation.
Occupational Unity	Need for united struggle of all waste pickers.
Practices	References to political practices of WPOs.
Legal Cases	Filing of legal cases to secure rights.
Negotiation	Direct negotiation with the state around laws and programmes.
Participatory Platforms	Participation in collective negotiation tables with (local) government.
Petitions	Organisations file petition to pressure the government.
Protests	Street protests, e.g. demonstrations.
Rights Claimed	Rights understood as won through political struggles.
Relations to Other Groups	Positionality of WPOs with groups other than WPOs.
Co-operativism	Reference to links with other co-operatives.
Informal Economies	Reference to links with other informal actors, e.g. street vendors.
Isolation	Reference to waste pickers' isolation and lack of linkages to other groups.
Reference Points	Reference to certain groups in waste pickers' discourses.
Gremio Reciclador	Reference to waste pickers as a cohesive group.
Unorganised Waste Pickers	Reference to waste pickers who do not belong to any organisation.
Weak Organisations	Reference to organisations which lack economic/political/administrative capacities.
Homeless/Migrants	Reference to homeless and/or migrant waste pickers who represent the most marginal group.

Name	Description
Own organisation	Talk about one's own organisation as reference point for improving waste pickers' conditions.
Rights Narratives	Discourses around waste pickers' rights, legitimizing demands and organisational aims.
Service Provision	Rights created through the services provided by WPOs.
Vulnerability	Rights based in waste pickers' vulnerability and poverty.
View of Political Environment	Perception of waste pickers' political environment.
Fear of Displacement	Fear of being displaced through state or private actors.
Security Threats	Threats to waste pickers' personal security through violence from state or private operators.
View of the State	Perceptions of the state.
Antagonistic	State perceived as actively working against waste pickers, e.g. colluding with private actors.
Neglect	State perceived as neglecting waste pickers, not delivering adequate support.
Potential	State perceived as positive force, capable of supporting waste pickers.
View on Formalisation	Perceptions of the formalisation framework.
Mixed	Formalisation is perceived to bring benefits, e.g. recognition & inclusion and having significant issues.
Negative	Formalisation is perceived as harming waste pickers, e.g. supporting private interests.
Positive	Formalisation is perceived exclusively positively.

Appendix VI - Spread of selected codes over cases

	Business benefits	Deregulate	Public Education	Welfare benefits	Organization al Upgrading	Co-ordinated coverage	Keep unregulated service	Giernio Reciclador	Own organization	Public Service Sanitation	Rights through Vulnerability Social	state antagonistic	state neglect	state potential
BO01	1	0	0	0	6	0	0	3	6	2	2	1	0	1
BO02	3	2	3	5	9	0	0	5	2	2	4	1	2	1
BO03	4	0	2	0	7	0	2	2	7	0	1	0	1	0
BO04	0	0	0	0	9	2	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	1
BO05	1	0	0	0	6	5	0	2	3	3	0	1	0	2
BO06	3	1	2	0	6	5	0	0	7	4	1	0	1	1
WO01	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	3	7	0
WO02	4	1	0	5	0	0	4	6	0	0	7	2	1	0
WO02-4**	5	3	0	11	0	0	1	7	0	1	11	13	8	0
WO05	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	6	0	0	0	2	3	1
WO06	3	3	0	3	3	0	1	0	0	0	15	8	1	0

* This simple coding spread shows tendencies in the narratives but does not replace a nuanced reading of the texts

** Group interview with three associated organizations