Waste Pickers and social innovations in Canada

Experiences from Vancouver and Montreal

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1. Introduction: Waste issues in Canada
Waste generation and waste diversion

- 2 kg waste generated per person/day
- 11% increase in solid waste collected between 2002 – 2014
- 77% of waste is landfilled
Waste diversion: a solution?
2. Waste governance

- Large differences in responsibilities and legal waste management framework
- Different authorities operating recycling programs
  - Public
  - Public/private
  - Private

Government spending in waste management
Grassroots and waste governance

• Introduction
  • Binning = informal resource recovery

• Social grassroots innovations
  • Montreal
  • Vancouver
3. Case study: Montreal (Les Valoristes)

- Cooperative formed in 2012
- 2000 binners in M.
- Objective
  - Create awareness about the social, environmental, and economic impacts of binners
  - Give them a voice and power to address the problems and complaints they face in their everyday work.
Scope of the project
(*Les Valoristes*)

- services, awareness, education
- social recognition – trust
- better quality material for higher value-added recycling
- waste reduction, effective recycling
- avoiding begging / illegal activities
- indirectly reducing the costs of municipal waste collection.
Social grassroots innovation (Les Valoristes)

• Benefits
  • Training in sorting
  • Specific skills training with partnering organizations
  • Increase in public awareness
  • Resource recovery

• Challenges
  • Official refund system in place does not support binners
  • Lobby against binning
4. Case study Vancouver (Binners’ Project)

- Created in 2014
- Approximately 2000 binners in V.
- Objectives
  - Improve economic opportunities for binners
  - Reduce the stigma
Scope of the project

*(Binners’ Project)*

• Regular binners’ meetings
• Business partnerships
  • *Back-of-House Waste Sorting*
  • *Binners’ Hook*
• Public awareness
  • *Coffee Cup Revolution*
• Improving transportation
  • *Universal Cart Pilot*
Social grassroots innovation (*Binners’ Project*)

**Benefits**
- Partnership building with residents and business
- Public awareness increased
  - *53,783 cups off Vancouver streets in just 3 hours*
- Increase in female binners

**Challenges**
- Lack of public policy supporting the diversion of different beverage containers
- Stigma
5. Concluding remarks

• Waste is becoming an issue
• Opportunity for social inclusion
• Grassroots initiatives
• Major hurdles
  • Public policy in governance
  • Stigma
  • Public awareness