

# **BETWEEN OPPORTUNITY AND DESIRE: THE WASTE BUSINESS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

## **Summary**

This article presents the information, the data, and the imperative of the “garbage” factor and how it can become a business that allows extremely poor populations to create a basis for daily sustenance; This is how an apprehension must be reached about what is done with these unwanted materials and how it can communicate to us about how we consume and our well-being, as well as being a maintenance tool, because as countries they thrive, their trash generation increases. Rapid urbanization and population growth add to the problem, as collection becomes increasingly complex and waste treatment sites are more difficult to locate and waste accumulation intensifies in countries less able to deal with it; We are going to build a contrast as is the case of Colombia and developed countries; find the warnings of the consequences of a huge imbalance, an inequality at both the national and international levels. This is where we realize that nothing less is at stake than our value system, our concept of democracy and, finally, also our economy.

## **Resumo**

Este artigo apresenta as informações, os dados e o imperativo do fator "lixo" e como ele pode se tornar um negócio que permite que populações extremamente pobres criem uma base para o sustento diário; É assim que uma apreensão deve ser alcançada sobre o que é feito com esses materiais indesejados e como ela pode se comunicar conosco sobre como

consumimos e nosso bem-estar, além de ser uma ferramenta de manutenção, pois, como países que prosperam, sua geração de lixo aumenta . Urbanização rápida eo crescimento da população aumenta o problema, à medida que a coleta se torna cada vez mais complexa e os locais de tratamento de resíduos são mais difíceis de localizar e a acumulação de resíduos se intensifica nos países menos capazes de lidar com isso; vamos construir um contraste como é o caso da Colômbia e dos EUA; encontre as advertências das consequências de um enorme desequilíbrio e desigualdade nos níveis nacional e internacional. É aqui que percebemos que nada menos está em jogo do que nosso sistema de valores, nosso conceito de democracia e, finalmente, também nossa economia.

**Keywords:** Garbage, business, poor, rich, livelihood, Colombia, USA, economy

**Palavras-chave:** Lixo, negócios, pobres, ricos, meios de subsistência, Colômbia, EUA, economia

## **Introduction**

The poor, the rich and inequality in Colombia and worldwide has been a topic that has been discussed for years, how unfortunate populations are affected and how elites benefit day after day, thus increasing the already existing gap, in this case, this article aims to show a reality still unknown to many. How does the garbage business influence these parallel communities? And is this influence beneficial for both or only for one side? This through an investigation in which related data on the constant changes in poverty, wealth and unemployment levels in the last decade are shown. However, poverty varies depending on the perspective of those who see or live it, the concept of government entities that the state seeks to favor in public policies that they propose every four years.

## **Methodology**

Two “suachunos” waste pickers were asked several questions that allowed us to generate a perspective on how waste pickers live in Colombia and how we can create a contrast with developed countries. “We recyclers classify us as destitute, and those opinions must be endured because it is our way of life: Consuelo Ramírez recycler of Soacha.” “It is for love that I do it”. Obviously also for the economic part, because we all need to get ahead, but it is not just a business issue but something that I feel to contribute my grain of sand to the improvement of the planet, it is also an innovative idea, what the great strata throw away, they serve to take advantage of it, ”says Diego, a recycler who lives in Soacha and his only livelihood is recycling. From these opinions that we have managed to undermine, it has allowed us to understand the way of life of these people who are the eyes of many colombians who have had to subjugate themselves to this sole means of maintaining their home. Only a small number of them can pay daily to spend the night in a passing home. During the investigation, on the other hand, his little interest in physical appearance and personal cleanliness is reflected, as well as a marked feeling of rejection and exclusion. This could be explained taking into account the hedonistic imperatives that govern the current society where, in general, one would tend to exclude and classify as bad what generates displeasure or nonconformity; Another relevant aspect is the recycler's immediate attitude towards his life. Through the applied instruments, the recycler's unique interest in living in the now is observed, without giving importance to the past or the future. His main interest is to earn some money to satisfy your immediate need for consumption.



*Image taken from Time. com*

That is why this is their only job allows them to sustain their need for illicit consumption and perhaps it is for this factor that the attitude of the recycler is, in some measure, positively directed towards his work.



*Image taken from Time. Com*

We find an economic observer (quantitative) that allows us to demonstrate the dichotomy that garbage represents in several countries, an online publication of the International Foundation for the Global Economic Challenge, makes a small analysis of the global

advances regarding recycling , and concludes that there are few countries in the world that have become aware of what it means to include the subject on public agendas.

Only the countries that make up the European Union show significant progress in the use of garbage. In the Nordic countries, for example, 60% of garbage is used, while in Belgium the percentage reaches 90%, as a result of the implementation of regionalized systems where the chain begins with waste producers.

In Latin America, the use of waste is different for cultural reasons; here the head of the chain is the gatherer and the activity has a great impact on employment. According to the World Bank, in the region there are around 70 million people dedicated to this activity.

According to what Diego and Consuelo tells us that in Colombia, it is estimated that there are 300,000 people who derive their income from recycling, of which only 30% are formally organized. According to Padilla, each recycler earns an average of \$ 8,000 a day for collecting 300 kilos of material, which is the maximum capacity that is recovered per day. In this channel, the chain works as follows: the street recycler takes the material to the intermediate warehouses, where they are paid \$ 250 per kilo. From these warehouses it is sent to the large collection centers, where they pay \$ 400 per kilo and from there it is sent to the large company, where the remuneration is \$ 550 per kilo.

The other collection channel is through the cleaning companies (Lime, Atesa, Aseo Capital and Ciudad Limpia), which are part of the recycling programs of the Bogota City Hall; There are also companies that specialize in serving the corporate segment, such as Residuos Ecoeficiencia S.A. On all fronts there is an opportunity to grow. The key is to create enough stimuli, develop a culture about the value of recycling, and create the necessary

conditions to achieve your goals. On all fronts there is an opportunity to grow. The key is to create enough stimuli, develop a culture about the value of recycling, and create the necessary conditions to achieve your goals.

## **Results**

This research allows us to demonstrate the determining concept of what is considered "reality". We are talking about a (Colombian) population where the pejorative aspects of poverty promote the act of deficiencies and needs that subjugate the quality of life. Most of these people, despite the long working hours, do not obtain sufficient resources to satisfy basic needs; According to what Mrs. Consuelo told us, in terms of food, they are totally precarious and do not have a social security system that protects them, but despite these conditions, the attitude of these people towards their work is positive.

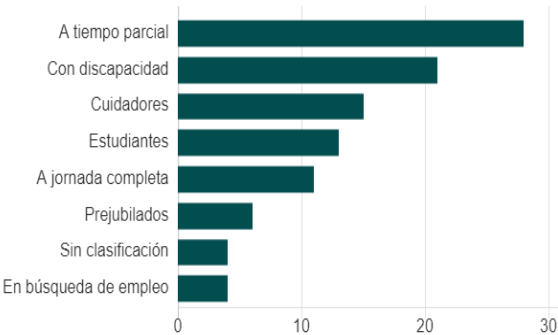
In the United States, we realized that the mentality from the aspect of recycling is different, its base line is in the recovery of the environment, therefore the desire to develop this work is based on a duty to the "planet", while that in Colombia, recycling is a way of surviving poverty.

In this case, and in developing countries, recycling is the basis of their income. In a study completed by Martin Melina in 2000, he discovered that 2% of the urban population in Asia and Latin America depends on recycling to survive. The informal sector is high within these countries, specifically in Latin America where 130 million workers come from this informal workplace (Ramirez, 2016). When we select larger countries like Brazil, we can see how big recycling is to survive. Catadores, the informal recyclers in Brazil, contribute 90% of the recycling of cities in exchange for money (The Guardian, 2017). The Tasters do

this informally, as the city refuses to accept them as municipal employees, although without them, the city would collect less than 2% of recyclable items.

Now, in the United States not everything is pink, although it is the richest country in the world, many people are not favored by this economy, according to a notification given by the BBC news in 2017, unemployment in the country is now only 4.1% - the lowest since 2000 - but there are many households that continue to see no improvement in their economy.

In 2016, almost 41 million people (13% of the population) lived in poverty compared to 15% recorded during the height of the recession in 2010



Source: BBC Brookings Institution.

In U.S.A. the median income in a four-person household is \$ 91,000. However, using the official income-based poverty measure before taxes and nutritional needs, families of four in poverty have a household income of less than \$ 24,300 a year. This may seem high compared to countries that the World Bank classifies as lower middle income, which are those with a Gross National Product per capita of between US \$ 1,000 and US \$ 4,000. But

both the high cost of living in the US how the widening gap with the middle classes can result in a difficult life for the poor of this country. Furthermore, the median income of families living in this situation is well below the poverty line (US \$ 9,600 per year). "Sometimes there is nothing to eat." Thank God I have family members who invite me a plate, but I'm ashamed of it, "says Débora Hernández, a US citizen, born and raised in a territory where there are no longer cowboys or livestock activities that move the local economy. (The rich, the poor and the trash) From the perspective of the statistics taken by the BBC, the people who are not classified are those who work in recycling modes, Inequality is the result of the opportunities that life brings, it damages society (Raworth Kate). That is why the opportunity of recycling provides a support for their survival.

### **Discussion**

As we see the situation that exists in the United States and in Colombia is not very different in terms of the difference between rich and poor, in Colombia we do not find a somewhat harsh reality in which the poorest must literally live from the garbage of the rich, and that is that the level of use of resources that the rich have is not the most optimal, the level of waste that can be reused works as a strategy for the neediest, thus turning the garbage of the rich into a business for the poor that However, it also generates millions in profits. in 2011 the portfolio magazine showed us an article in which it tells us that the country annually manages \$ 658,000 million pesos generated by recycling, thus providing a large number of informal jobs and others more informally, however if we look a little deeper the managers of these companies are people belonging to the wealthiest families in the country, thus being the most benefited, materials such as plastic containers and tetra packs, are the ones



that generate the most profitability, however we also find that almost 60% of the materials that could be used, they lose the process since they are not properly separated from those that cannot have a second useful life. It is also important to clarify that one aspect that influences recycling is the high costs of structure and transportation for the proper use of these materials.

But because it turns out to be such a profitable business for a few, as we mentioned earlier, despite being an industry that generates millions of jobs, many of these are generated informally, which saves millions of pesos for these companies in health, pension and all kinds of provision expenses established by law.

### **Conclusion**

Currently the recyclers are under a scenario where there is no cohesion in this regard, the recyclers who consider this work as a trade (which really is) are not considered "formal" workers, therefore their incomes are insignificant, superfluous formations of money, and it is there where we are allowed to generate an apprehension about poverty as a complex social phenomenon, with multiple facets, causes and determinants (ECLAC, 2003) leads to having the need to make an analysis from the perspective of people. Comprehensive understanding of social, economic, institutional, cultural factors, etc. that they permeate the realities of individuals allows us to focus their study from a point of view that goes beyond a measurement via income. Thus, poverty understood only as the lack of economic resources to survive limits the analysis of this phenomenon by not considering its multidimensional nature, nor the position of the main actors. Therefore, relativizing its concept allows the "poor" population to be assimilated as a fundamental part of the

problem. Since conducting the specific interview with the Soacha recyclers, we have realized that in a world where plastic fills our homes and our oceans, recycling is more important now than ever to maintain healthy living conditions for us, as well as the creatures with whom we share this world. The question we ask ourselves now is, how do we get people to recycle their waste? Some countries have decided to offer people an incentive for recycling, we note high recycling rates in the poorest communities. The government is intended to support this work which is honorable as a formal livelihood. Reaching out to the poorest communities for recycling for money helps these people avoid begging and instead focus on an informal recycling sector, that can become important from an economic and environmental point of view. Once governments welcome these informal sectors as a benefit to the broader community, the incentive to recycle will prove highly effective, especially within these resource-poor communities.

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