



RECLAIMERS ORGANISING THE FUTURE

How organizing influenced reclaimers' understanding of integration and their relationship with Pikitup

Bachelor of Science Honours Project

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Abstract

Focusing on the reclaimers who live in Bekezela, Newtown located in the inner city of Johannesburg, South Africa, this paper investigates the influence of organising on reclaimers' understanding of waste picker integration and their relationship with Johannesburg's Pikitup waste management utility. It focuses specifically on the separation at source programme initiated by Pikitup in 2009. The research question is: How does organising against Pikitup's separation at source plans influence reclaimers' understanding of integration and their relationship with Pikitup? To answer this question this paper engages literature on reclaimers' identity, how waste is conceptualised, integration and mobilisation. Importantly the paper explores how and why they reclaimers organised against Pikitup's separation at source and the strategies and challenges they faced during the course of organising. The main method used in the research of this paper is ethnography, coupled with observations and semi-structured interviews. The findings of the paper show that organising did not change the relationship between the reclaimers and Pikitup and that their understanding of integration changed from just wanting Pikitup to not disturb their work to a more informed idea of what can be gained from integration. Importantly, through the experience of organising reclaimers gained more understanding of who they are which increased their confidence.



Image 1: Joburg reclaimers appeal to the municipal government for recognition of their contribution to the city's waste management. Photo: WIEGO, (2017)

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Chapter 1- Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Whether at national, regional or local level, the government always use the phrase “vuk’uzenzele” (meaning wake up and do it yourself) in motivating South African citizens to initiate ways of working and fighting poverty instead of waiting for hand-outs from the government. In response to this, reclaimers (people who make a living by collecting recyclable waste material from the streets, landfills and waste bins in people’s homes) started collecting and selling solid waste to support their families and consequently keeping the city clean. Instead of being compensated by institutions like Pikitup for their economic and environmental contribution, reclaimers have become victims of privatisation, neoliberalism and negative perceptions by the society. This paper focuses on reclaimers who live in Bekezela, Newtown, which is located in the inner city of Johannesburg. In 2017 a number of reclaimers from Bekezela joined other reclaimers from around the city in organising against the separation at source recycling programme implemented by the city’s Pikitup waste management utility. This study investigates how their experience organising against Pikitup influence how they understand integration, and their relationship with Pikitup.

1.2 Why Organise against Pikitup

Moemedi¹ is the key organiser of reclaimers, he is also completing his masters in education and work. Moemedi has 30 years of experience in South African left politics and organising from multiple COSATU² unions. When asked why reclaimers are organising against Pikitup Moemedi replied:

“Reclaimers have been organising since the 1960s, but what motivated the immediate action against Pikitup is the programme of separation at source which promotes privatisation that prevents reclaimers’ access to material” (Moemedi, 3 November 2017)

This means that reclaimers did not start organising because of Pikitup but they started organising against Pikitup because of S@S (separation at source). S@S was initiated by Pikitup at the Watervaal Depot which covers suburbs like Westcliff and Northcliff in 2009. The main objective of this programme was to deviate waste from the landfills and change

¹ Pseudonym

² Congress of South African Trade Unions

people's perception of waste so that they can see it as a resource (Ndlangamandla, 2010). To achieve this S@S encourages residents to separate their different waste in different bags provided by Pikitup i.e. plastic, glass, paper and cardboard. In this initiative Pikitup also worked with multiple private companies in the waste industry, and these private companies were encouraged to work with reclaimers (Ndlangamandla, 2010). As planned, the second phase of S@S rolled out in 2010 in Soweto (South Western Townships).

When Pikitup signed companies under the S@S programme, Pikitup encouraged these private to work with reclaimers, which means they did not have to and also if they do, they reclaimers have to work on the private companies' terms (WIEGO, 2017). The reclaimers I worked with reported that Pikitup has never contacted them with any programme they implemented, and they found out about the private companies on the newspapers. The reclaimers said they consulted with Pikitup but never got any response. Another thing that reclaimers mentioned is that Pikitup employed random people who are not reclaimers, and indeed Pikitup did admit that they were aware that it is possible that the people who are hired will not be reclaimers (WIEGO, 2017). Because of S@S residents started taking out the separated material is only taken out when Pikitup's and private companies' trucks arrives which means reclaimers have to access to the waste as they usually take it from the bins placed outside residents' homes. And because of S@S, reclaimers who work in the landfills automatically also lost access to material. Consequently threatening the livelihoods of over 10 000 reclaimers. Pikitup actually signed these private companies' contacts in July this year (2017) despite the appeal that reclaimers made in 2016, that Pikitup must engage with them regarding anything that affects their work (WIEGO, 2017). This was contradictory to the national government policy and contract commitments made by the city (WIEGO, 2017). This is essentially what led to reclaimers organising against Pikitup and planning a protest.

1.3 Rationale

There is established literature on how reclaimers organise to get their demands. However it does not capture how the process of organising shape them and their demands. Thus the importance of critically engaging with the issue of organising is that if we know how organising shape reclaimers understanding of themselves and their demands, we will stand a better chance in trying to integrate the reclaimers in such a way that they are protected from dispossession and exploitation. In Brazil the national solid waste policy was implemented in an attempt to put an end to the repressive policies on waste picking (Dias, 2011). The benefits

of this included good work conditions for reclaimers, housing and health care benefits (Dias, 2011). Therefore investigating the relationship between reclaimers and Pikitup will give direct information on how the reclaimers feel about reclaimer integration. In most developing countries waste mismanagement is seriously spoiling the environmental conditions. The negative impact on the environment by poor waste management can be easily seen globally (Ejaz et al, 2010). But according to the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 every South African citizen has a right to environment that is not harmful to their wellbeing (Government Gazette, 1998). Reclaimers contribute a lot in trying to keep this citizen right, so integration will be a good way to recognise reclaimers as service providers and good members of the society (Dias, 2011)

1.4 Background

In the 1970s the ILO (International Labour Organisation) introduced the concept of informality, which focused on the unprotected and unrecognised working poor in the developing countries (Justice, 2002). Informal work is usually not monitored by any authority like the state. Reclaiming is informal worker because reclaimers are self-employed, they do not pay tax, and they do not sign any formal contract that determine how they work (Justice, 2002). What makes reclaiming informal work is that it is not secure and it is free entry i.e. anyone can do it however, whenever and wherever they want without processes like interviews (Justice, 2002). Johannesburg is a city where most of the South African population go to find job opportunities. Consequently Johannesburg has a high rate of population increase, which increases the rate of waste production (Sentime, 2011). This waste increase is what reclaimers capitalise on to provide for their families (Sentime, 2011).

WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) conducted an Informal Economy Monitoring Study (IEMS) with 763 waste pickers in five African cities, Asia and America and found various benefits that waste picker award society with (WIEGO, 2013). This includes selling the waste material to businesses like organic matter to fertiliser companies, some material to artists and groups to re-imagine. This reduces the demand to produce virgin material (WIEGO, 2013). Reclaimers divert a significant amount of valuable materials from the waste stream. For example, WIEGO found that in six cities studied in the IEMS 3 million tons of waste is recycled yearly which helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the most cheapest and quick way (Dias, 2012). This simply means street waste reclaimers are advocates for ensuring people live the environment that is not harmful to their

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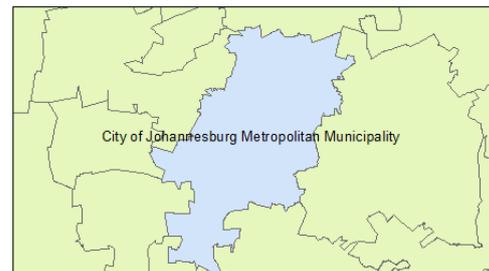
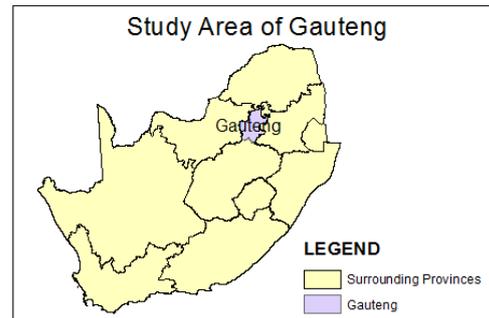
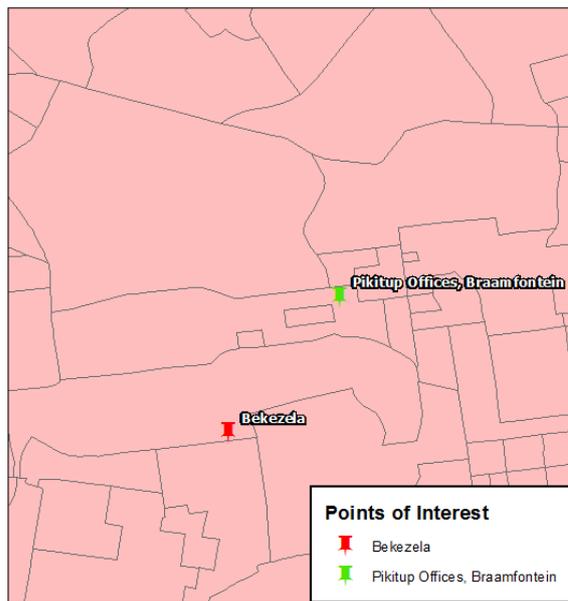
wellbeing. And lastly reclaimers reduce crime by reducing unemployment. In South Africa, research by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) found that reclaimers are saving municipalities approximately R750 millions annually (CSIR, 2016).

Bekezela is located beneath the M1 highway bridge on Carr Street in Newtown. It was initially Bekezela College which was shutdown in 2001. Bekezela was initially a College and was shutdown in 2001, after its closure Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) took control of the land and property to accommodate its employees (security). However, today Bekezela shelters approximately 500 homeless people in small concrete houses and shacks, majority of whom are reclaimers (Panchia and Bege 2017). Like many other abandoned buildings occupied by the homeless in Johannesburg, Bekezela has fallen apart. Sejake (2016) interviewed Lance who have been staying in Newtown for over 30 years and owns a business there, according to Lance Bekezela is notorious and well known to be the hub of crime with large number of hijackings and smash and grabs taking place on the M1 highway. However Bekezela is not a typical “poverty fuels crime” scene, in fact even harsh, dehumanising conditions of Bekezela most people have established a way of life mostly through reclaiming and others through other things like selling sweets and peanuts on the streets (Panther, 2017).



Image 2: Bekezela. Home of the waste pickers. Photo: Yeshiel Panchia (2017)

Map showing Bekezela and Pikitup Offices



Author: Kabelo Phakoe
Coordinate System: GCS Hartebeesthoek 1994
Datum: Hartebeesthoek 1994
Units: Degree

The map above was created using ArcMap and Google Earth.

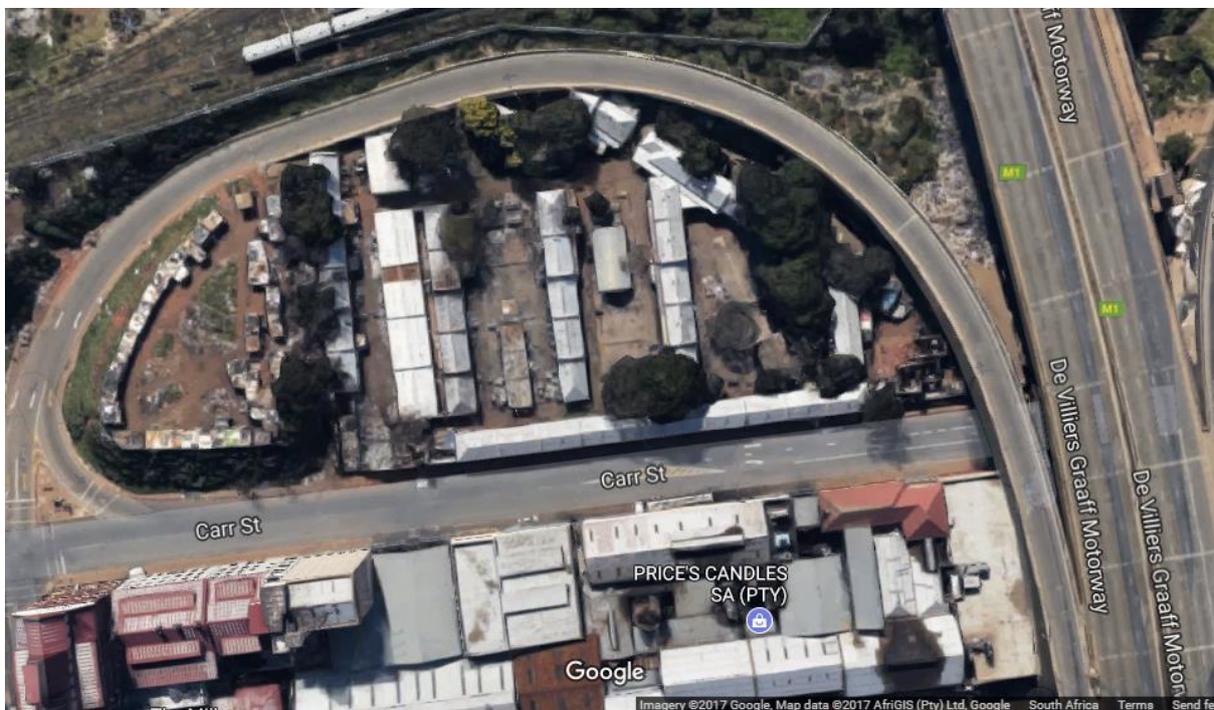


Image 3: Aerial photo of Bekezela. Photo: Google Maps, (2017)

1.5 Research question

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Initially the focus was on reclaimers that live in Braamfontein which is also where Pikitup (The official integrated waste management service provider to the City of Johannesburg) offices are located. So my research question was “How does the relationship between street reclaimers and Pikitup influence reclaimers’ understanding of integration in Braamfontein, Johannesburg?”. But after preliminary field work I found out that Braamfontein is an area that reclaimers just pass by while working. I focused on reclaimers that live close to Pikitup in the CBD, and met with reclaimers who live in Bekezela so my area of study became Bekezela, Newtown. I also found out the reclaimers I worked with are all involved with the organising against Pikitup and that actually they part of key organisers of the movement. This made me focus on organising because after preliminary field work I realised that the process of organising will influence both reclaimers’ relationship with Pikitup and their understanding of integration.

Consequently after a discussion with my supervisor I reframed the research question and it became: How does organising against Pikitup’s S@S plans influence reclaimer’s understanding of intergration and their relationship with Pikitup?

In order to assist in answering the overall research question, five sub-questions were developed:

1. What do Bekezela reclaimers know about Pikitup?
2. How would Bekezela reclaimers describe their relationship with Pikitup?
3. How would Bekezela reclaimers want to interact with Pikitup?
4. What do Bekezela reclaimers know about integration and Pikitup’s programmes?
5. Why and how are Bekezela reclaimers organising the movement against Pikitup?

1.6 Overall view of the report

This first chapter of the report provided an introduction to the project, the background, and the research questions. Chapter 2 presents a literature review of the key themes relevant to the study. The third chapter is the methodology and methods chapter, and this will show the methodology and methods used with explanation of why they are good for the research. Chapter 4 presents results and discussion, which will be focussing on analysing the results and applying relevant theories and discussion. In the last chapter I give a conclusion of the whole paper and answer the main question referring to the results.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

A literature review is a process of critically analysing and evaluating published academic and non-academic material that is relevant to a chosen research topic with the aim of demonstrating how the research fits within a larger field of study (Labaree, 2009). The key themes in existing research relevant to this study include: Conceptualisation of waste, organising, waste reclaimer identity and lastly reclaimer integration. Conceptualisation of waste is important because understanding waste can help change the negative perception of waste and hence waste reclaimers. The research project focuses on how organising changed reclaimers' understanding of integration and their relationship with Pikitup. Literature on integration is therefore also important because it introduces different perspectives of integration, which will serve as a good base in understanding reclaimer integration. Waste reclaimer identity is crucial because through the literature in this theme I am able to see how respect and positive perception about street waste reclaimers can be created. Lastly reclaimer integration is also a key theme because it is important to know how street waste reclaimers understand integration so that their ideas about the process are heard, and clear to the state plus stakeholders.

2.1 Conceptualisation of Waste

Waste is defined as any material that cannot be used by a consumer no more, it can be leftovers in a household, or at work (Schenck et al, 2012). Parallax is how the angle at which one views and object influences the perception and direction of how the object is seen (Rouse, 2012). Evidently waste is increasingly being viewed at a parallax object because of how it is viewed by different people (Moore, 2012). Reclaimers view waste as a commodity, a resource that they sell and make a living out of (Moore, 2012). However waste is also seen as filth, demeaning and an object that should be separated from oneself (Moore, 2012). Therefore the further away one is from waste the more social power they have, this is could also be the reason why waste dumps and facilities like landfills are located near homes of the poor.

Gidwana and Reddy (2011) argue that:

“Waste is the political other of capitalist value, repeated with difference as part of capital’s spatial histories of surplus accumulation” (p. 1625).

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This means that waste and capitalist value are closely linked, i.e. as production increases waste also increases and vice versa. Waste is a good indication of the success of capitalism, because one throws away a container of an old product so that they can buy a new one. Gregson and Crang (2015) explore and analyse the structures that slow down the debate on waste between the Global South and the Global North. According to Gregson and Crang (2015) waste is mostly addressed at a municipal level and therefore focusing on domestic consumption, but the current ways of addressing waste at international level are embedded in the idea of global environmental justice and Basel Convention. Gregson and Crang argue that these ways must be revised because, In lower income countries this waste is used as a resource compared to the global North where waste is not necessarily viewed in that manner (Gregson and Crang, 2015), this help us understand the dynamic economic link between the Global South and the Global North. This paper will be drawing on Moore's view on waste as a parallax object.

2.2 Organising Informal Workers

Organisation is a process that builds awareness about a certain issue in a community which motivates members to come together and develop solutions to the issue (Fuchs, 2006). Organising is the basis for all intervention types and occupational recognition as keystone for professionalization (GIZ, 2015, p. 32). Like other forms of informal work, reclaiming is not regulated by the law. Consequently reclaimers do not have job security and generally do not have worker rights (WIEGO, 2013). So it is not surprising that they organising themselves to fight for their rights. Solidarity is one key principle behind organising because it is formed by elements such as gender, class, religion etc. which are used to bring people together towards one goal (Channell, 2000). Forming cooperatives is one common way of organising reclaimers. Encouraged by the human rights movements and democracy reclaimers cooperatives started around 20th century in the Latin America countries and other countries like Argentina followed, today most countries have cooperatives globally (Marello and Helwege, 2014). Reclaimers are diverse, so it is important that the leadership of organising reclaimers represents every reclaimer. For example in a paper by Melanie Samson where she was looking at organising of reclaimers in Tshwane (one of South African metropolitan), the reclaimer committees in the landfills ensured that gender is balanced in the committee (Samson, 2010). If an organisation strategy does not have good networks it will not be able to reach the needed masses of relevant participants (Klandermans and Oegema, 1987). This is because good networks increase the bargaining power for the organising

leadership depending on the organisational level (Sarmiento and Tilly, 2013). Marelo and Helwege (2014) argue that networks are important for reclaimers because they promote the recognition of the environmental, economic and social contributions that reclaimers make. Networks also create advocating teams for waste picker-inclusive policies, strengthening waste pickers' organizations and sharing knowledge (Marelo and Helwege, 2014). In Tshwane, reclaimers started a network in order to negotiate with the waste buyers to increase their prices and ensure that those prices are the same for all dumps. Through this, reclaimers got to engage with the biggest buyers in Tshwane. Although not all buyers agreed, the network meetings with buyers changed buyers' perceptions of reclaimers and made the buyers to engage with reclaimers more as negotiating and business partners (Samson, 2010). In conclusion, there are a lot of challenges in organising ranging from determining the objective of the organisation, principles that will attract relevant member and so forth. But the key issue for reclaimers is the struggle for recognition, this is because reclaimers stand on a different position from someone who is formally employed. So reclaimers must have organisation strategies that will gain them recognition from the society, local and national authority among others (Theron, 2010). It is definitely possible for a reclaimer to work alone successfully but more is always achieved when people with the same interests work together.

2.3 Reclaimer integration

“Integration refers to a situation where recycling is a recognised official occupation, and informal recyclers have a legal identity, are protected by laws and decrees, covered by social protection schemes, and increasingly paid for the value of the service they are delivering to the city and the environment” (Scheinberg et al, 2016, p. 822).

There has been successful cases in other developing countries where street waste reclaimers get formally acknowledged by the state, stakeholders and the society (Scheinberg, 2012). In these countries the strategies initiated are applied into the policy and legislation which protects street waste reclaimers from privatisation and neoliberal systems (Scheinberg, 2012). In South Africa, the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) hosted a workshop called The Waste Pickers Workshop in 2015. One key discussion in the workshop was legal framework towards reclaimers, from this workshop DEA was given recommendations to develop national guidelines and standards to be used by municipalities for inclusion of reclaimers in the formal waste management system (DEA report, 2015). With adequate

financial support Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) that are involved in waste management can play a role in representing and lobbying for reclaimers (DEA report, 2015). In Bangladesh NGOs provide work gear and train reclaimers how to recycle organic waste and sell it to fertilizer companies (Gupta, 2012). Apart from being seen as informal workers street waste reclaimers are essentially entrepreneurs, in a paper by Sobuce there is suggestion that street waste reclaimers should be given opportunities to form Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) (Sobuce, 2012). Even though some reclaimers do not have good educational background SMMEs would create an opportunities to develop skills to make their own terms and conditions on how they want to sell their waste to the companies and the state (Sobuce, 2012). This would allow them to make the profit they deserve to make because their job is really taxing. WIEGO has recognised empowering waste pickers as workers, professionals and enterprises the core of informal integration. This is because empowering will promote reclaimers being treated like professionals and not social victims nor public nuisance (GIZ, 2015).

This section has presented what integration is and some of the ideas used in different countries to achieve integration. There are differences in how municipal authorities see the informal sector in different places (Gupta, 2012). Therefore because they have the authority to implement any plan or system, how they see informal work and informal workers might influence their effort in integrating informal workers. The following review will be discussing reclaimers' identity.

2.4 Reclaimer identity

Reclaimers are people who make a living by collecting recyclable waste material from the streets, landfills and waste bins in people's homes. People decide to work with waste because: They are unemployed and poor, they do not have the required minimum education required to get employed, there is no age limit, low skill is required, payment is done in cash and the failing waste systems creates favourable conditions for waste picking (Oelofse, 2011). Reclaimers are often marginalised, seen as foreigners, public nuisance and the ultimate symbols of urban poverty mostly because of how they look during work (Lister, 2007; Beall, 1997; Samson, 2010). Another contribution to this negative perception about reclaimers is the idea that reclaimers are born to this work, for example in India the Dalit groups have been and are still working with waste so it is their ancestral occupation (Beall, 1997). In the beginning of industrial capitalism Karl Marx referred to reclaimers as "rag

pickers” and argued that they are too weak, broken and unstable to organise a class, they are underclass outlaws who do have solidarity and organisational power to challenge capital (Rosaldo, 2016).

Reclaimers contribute to waste recovery 20 times more than the formal sector. Waste recovery by reclaimers divert a lot of waste away from the landfills and reduce the production of virgin material. All this make reclaimers agents of environmental sustainability because their work reduce greenhouse gas emissions and extend the life of landfills (Cason, 2011). In Delhi, India EUR 6.7-7.5 million is saved annually because reclaimers who work in the street collect waste from households, which means depending on the waste recovered municipality saves on transport costs. Landfill reclaimers also contribute economically because by recovering material in the landfills they reduce disposal expenses (Gupta, 2012). Besides economic and environmental contributions, Reclaimers also help reduce crime because they do not have resort to criminal activities like selling drugs or robbing people. The word “entreprendre” is French for “take on”, so reclaimers are entrepreneurs because while they provide a service to the community, they are taking on a form of business activism (Scheinberg, 2012; Thieme, 2010). There is established literature on reclaimers that explores how the society perceives them. But not much is said about how reclaimers see themselves within the society, and how they perceive their identity in relation to authority like the police or companies like Pikitup. This research aims to bridge the gap by investigating how reclaimers understand reclaimer integration through their experience with organising against Pikitup.

Conclusion

This section has engaged with various literature on the key themes. On conceptualisation of waste this paper uses Moore’s argument of perceiving waste as a parallax object. This is because her argument accommodates opposing perspectives, which keeps an open mind on how different people see waste. Focusing on solidarity paper discuss how and why reclaimers organise themselves especially because anyone can start reclaiming. Because of the idea of integration or the vision, changing people’s perceptions about reclaimers is key, but it is also important to understand how reclaimers see themselves. Lastly this paper contributes to integration by investigating how reclaimers understand integration and what they expect from it.

Chapter 3- Methodology and Methods

This chapter outlines the research methodology and methods employed in order to answer the research question.

3.1 Methodology

“Research Methodology is a way to find out the result of a given problem on a specific matter or problem that is also referred as research problem. In Methodology, the researcher uses different criteria for solving/searching the given research problem. Different searchers uses different type of methods for solving the problem and this depends on the type of problem” (Industrial Research Institute, 2010, p.1)

A qualitative methodology is shown by easily understandable description from people’s encounters with it and it highlights numerous perspectives. It has a flexibility that allows for more questions to be asked or investigations to be conducted, which is fruitful when dealing with projects aimed at obtaining insight into conditions. Qualitative methodology offers in-depth descriptions of methods and information linked to the topic of the research, and it depends the response of the research participants to influence the results (Corbetta, 2003; Weiss, 1994). On this account the chosen methodology for this research was qualitative. This is because it created a natural setting which allowed the street waste reclaimers to free express themselves, which to a richer and insightful information on themselves, their work, how they feel about Pikitup and what they want from integration. Furthermore the research was not numeric it depended on the street waste reclaimers response to the sub-questions prepared.

3.1.1 Research Site

As noted in the introduction, initially this research intended to focus on reclaimers in Braamfontein. On the 6th of June 2016 I met with Tshepo at a work shop (to develop national guidelines on reclaimer integration) that my supervisor invited me to help with translating African languages in Pretoria, Department of Environmental Affairs. I talked to him about my project and explained that I need reclaimers to work with from Braamfontein. He explained to me that no reclaimer lives in Braamfontein, but he knows reclaimers that live in Newtown which is the close place to Braamfontein where reclaimers live. One has to consider the inherently power imbalance between researcher and participant, because the depth of the information that the participant share during the research depends on the quality

and nature of their relationship with the researcher (McGinn, 2009). After attending reclaimers meeting in downtown Johannesburg at Khanya College, Tshepo invited me to Bekezela where he lives.

Bekezela is 2km away from Braamfontein. It is not protected and it is made up of small concrete houses with no working sewage system and proper electricity. Because Bekezela was abandoned before reclaimers occupied it, they do not get most municipal services, so organic waste is thrown in one corner because it is not collected by Pikitup. See image 2, image 3 and map above.

3.2 Methods

This section will be discussing the methods used and why they are useful in answering the sub-question and main question.

The methods table below shows which methods I utilised to answer sub-questions, and the methods were used to specific sub-questions because of their characteristics and relevance which helped to get data in the best way possible.

Figure 2: Methods Table

Sub-question	Evidence needed	Methods used	Respondent
What do Bekezela Street reclaimers know about Pikitup?	Response on what street waste reclaimers know about pikitup	Semi-structured interviews, Ethnography	Street waste reclaimer
How would Bekezela street reclaimers interact with Pikitup?	Subjective response on how street waste reclaimers engage with Pikitup	Semi-structured interviews, Field observation, Ethnography	Street waste reclaimer
What do Bekezela reclaimers know about integration and Pikitup's programmes?	Knowledge from street waste reclaimers on Pikitup's integration programmes	Semi-structured interviews, Ethnography	Street waste reclaimer

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How would Bekezela street reclaimers describe their relationship with Pikitup?	Subjective response on how street waste reclaimers think their relationship with Pikitup is like	Semi-structured interviews, Field observation, Ethnography	Street waste reclaimer
How and why are Bekezela street reclaimers organising a movement against Pikitup	Reason behind organising a movement against Pikitup and steps taken to organise reclaimers	Semi-structured interviews, Field observation, Ethnography	Street waste reclaimer

3.2.1 Ethnography

My main method was ethnography which is defined as:

“Ethnography is not just another method, for capturing and measuring data. Like other methods in the social and behavioural sciences, ethnography is an analytic description of the behaviours that characterize and distinguish cultures or sociocultural groups. But unlike other approaches, ethnography goes beyond mere “objective analytic description” to include a description and analysis of the knowledge and beliefs that generate and interpret those behaviours” (Akins and Beschner, 1979, p. 17)

I spent 10 days with the reclaimers. The initial plan was to interview 5 street reclaimers whom live in Braamfontein. But I got to work with 4 reclaimers and had 2 sessions of interviews i.e. before and after the strike, which summed up to 8 interviews. I met with reclaimers in the regular meetings and organising activities they have. The interviews and conversations I had with them were during break or after the meeting. I took field notes during these sessions, including meeting minutes. I also got to be with them when they were preparing for the strike and they had pamphlets and posters planning who goes to which areas of the city to mobilise reclaimers. Ethnography required me to be patient and not generalise before I consult the several observations and notes I took. The nature of ethnography helped me gain a lot of trust from the reclaimers.

3.2.2 Field observation

The second method was field observation. Before the preliminary field work the idea for the field observation was to spend time with the participants in their work area in order to have a practical experience of their work (Khan, et al. 2016). However, during my fieldwork period the reclaimers were focusing on the campaign to oppose Pikitup's S@S programme. As a result they did not spend time reclaiming. I attended their organising activities and meetings with them. Through these meetings I got to spend a time with Bekezela street waste reclaimers, and got to see the society and surroundings through the lens of street waste reclaimers. This will allowed me to get first-hand experience and gave me a chance to see any inconsistency or biasness I might receive while interviewing the reclaimers (Shapurjee and Charlton, 2013)

3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

The last method I employed were semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are essentially question and answer sessions, where the interviewer asks the participants questions in an environmental suitable for the participants. The reasons why I chose to conduct the interviews one on one is that it made it easy for the participant to be free especially considering the current political climate with pikitutp (Wengraf, 2001). This method is made of open ended question which allows unlimited responses consequently producing good quality information from the freely given responses (Wengraf, 2001; Weiss, 1994). Semi-structured interviews allow for the interviewer to will clearly explain to the participants what the research is about and reason for conducting it so that participants can decide whether or not they want be part of the conversation (Corbetta, 2003).

3.2.4 Ethical Considerations

Prior doing fieldwork, I applied for and received ethical clearance³ to the Human Research Ethics Committee in the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies at The University of the Witwatersrand. Ethical is important because since my research is qualitative, I was getting personal information from street reclaimers on how they feel hence it was important that my questioning is sensitive enough and that my research is doable. Importantly, the first step was to ensure that the reclaimers have my information, fully understand the research and objective (Babbie, 2007). Consent forms were given to

³ Ethics protocol number is GAES2017-22

reclaimers who wanted to participate which outline confidentiality and anonymity terms just to ensure that they will not be in any risk by speaking freely, and that their identity will not be disclosed. And in the interest of their confidentiality I used pseudonyms. If needs be, any sensitive information will not be used without the reclaimers consent.

3.2.5 Limitations

South Africa has 11 official languages, and of the 11 only 9 are African. I can fluently speak five of the African languages and I understand the other 4, so language was not a limitation for me. A common barrier was when some reclaimers did not have a cell phone because communication was difficult. So I had to just go to Bekezela on the agreed date and hope to find the reclaimer. Some reclaimers did not want to participate in study because of the lack of trust in people considering they maybe are illegal immigrants and also looking at the experiences they have with society at large mentioned earlier in this paper. Consequently I did not work with reclaimers who are immigrants.

Chapter 4- Results and Discussion

This chapter introduces the reclaimers I worked with, presents the findings and discuss them according to the key themes. The findings are analysed in such a way that relevant concepts and literature is applied. This is important because literature helps explore the interconnectedness between the themes, highlight the broader significance of the findings, and make sense of the findings.

4.1 The reclaimers

Moemedi said that when he started with organising he had to go to the streets and find where reclaimers are, he got to Bekezela. At Bekezela he met with Vuyo, Nkosi, Tshepo and Samuel. He described them as activists because they are a group that is quick to grasp the principles of the activism, they are also aware of the issues that reclaimers are facing and there are convinced about the necessity for a solidary action. So he works closely with them, because they are basically the nucleus of the whole movement.

Tshepo is a Zulu man in his mid-twenties. He previously owned a small catering business, selling tripe and pap with his girlfriend in Newtown by the taxi rank. When it collapsed he then joined reclaiming which he was aware of when he his business was still working.

Tshepo knew about Bekezela so he when he started reclaiming he went to Bekezela and got a room, he now lives in Bekezela with his girlfriend. Like the other 3 reclaimers, Tshepo said

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that because of the scarcity of material he works everywhere in the city, there is no place that is off-limits as long as material is available and reclaimers are allowed to work.

Samuel's home language is Xhosa, and he is 53 years old. Before he became a reclaimer he was a security guard. After he was fired in 1996 he struggled to find work. Then he decided to join reclaimers because he realised they could afford to support themselves off the reclaiming money, and he actually realised that he was still making the same money as when he was a security guard but without unnecessary rules. Samuel now lives in Bekezela with his wife and they also sell sweets and cigarettes at Bekezela.

Vuyo is a Zulu man, originally from Kwazulu natal and he is in his mid-fifties. He came to Johannesburg to find work but struggled for a long time. When he asked money from the reclaimers he knew they just told him how they get money and he decided to join for the time being but because he was able to send money home he decided to reclaim full time.

Nkosi is 26 years old, his home language is Sesotho. He actually joined reclaiming so that he can pay his fees for matric but after he completed he did not feel like he has to apply for a job and work for someone so he just continued with reclaiming.

4.2 Reclaimer Identity

In this section I describe how reclaimers see themselves and secondly how they see and understand their relationship with Pikitup.

4.2.1 Being a reclaimer

Samson (2010) argues that the negative perception of waste promotes stigmatisation of reclaimers. The quotes above show that despite this, Pikitup reclaimers feel they are superior to street reclaimers even though they are both working with waste. As mentioned in the introduction, waste reclaimers save approximately R750 million annually for South African municipalities (CSIR, 2016). However Lister (2007) argues that regardless of their contribution, they are understood to be poor people and most likely foreigners. This was echoed by Samuel:

"I know that people think we all are just jankies (drug addicts), but the truth is that we have different types of reclaimers here in Bekezela, we have people who reclaim to support their families and take kids to school even varsity, we have people who reclaim just to have money for drinking, we have nyaope boys and we have

foreigners. But as different as we are, we are all family no one must be left behind”
(Samuel, 3 August 2017)

Within reclaimers there are some who live to the stereotypes of expectations of the society, however as Nkosi mentions, they are more than just drug addicts. In addition, street waste reclaimers contribute massively to environmental conservation by collecting solid waste even where municipalities cannot reach (or where they are not willing to go) like deep in certain townships, their work help reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Godfrey et al, 2016).

Social identity theory argues that a person’s self-esteem depends on group that they belong to, and in order to grow the pride and self-esteem, people enhance the image of the group they belong to (Tifel and Turner, 1979). This explains why Pikitup workers belittle reclaimers, because they are socially categorised to be workers not nyaope boys like society calls reclaimers. Participating in the organising campaign changed the way reclaimers perceive themselves and are perceived by others. When asked how the movement change how they feel about themselves reclaimers said:

“I work with Nyaope⁴ boys and some of them I know personally, so people will always treat me bad but I have always had enough confidence to survive. But since the movement I feel more powerful because I know I can get more than I ever imagined, we communicate with people from high places and academic Professors like Melanie, my work is very important” (Samuel, 3 August 2017)

This proves that reclaimers are aware of the negative perception about them, they recognise that it is part of the reason Pikitup workers feel superior to them. But the movement has been a great tool in enhancing the image of their group (reclaimers), which also grow their self-esteem and confidence, giving a new or strong identity and understanding of who they are.

In his book titled “Learning to Grow Old”, Paul Tournier says that man is the measure of all things therefore the job does not determine a man’s value but it is the man who gives the job its dignity cited in (Fryers, 2006, p. 21). In reality things are different, what defines a real man is “what he does” meaning the kind of job he does (Fryers, 2006), so the type of job you do determines the group you are part of which then constructs your identity in the public’s eye . When asked about what his family thinks about his job a reclaimer responded:

⁴ Nyaope is a highly addictive drug which is made up of anti-retro-viral, rat poison, marijuana and acid.

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“My family thinks I work for Pikitup as a recycler, I do not want to correct them or tell them otherwise because I have gained respect when I bring money and they see that I am not bothering them I am standing on my own” (Tshepo, 3 August 2017)

Basically he hides his identity as a reclaimer from the family, because since Pikitup is known being attached to it enhances his identity and confidence in his family’s eyes. The family respects him because he has a “real job”. But one would expect that because a real man must provide and protect, bringing money should be enough for the reclaimer to be respected. Another reclaimer said that:

”Back at home they now know what I do, they now happy about I but when they started seeing the money and when I showed them my t-shirt they accepted but I can’t say they are proud” (Vuyo, 3 August, 2017)

So even though reclaimers are able to provide for their families, their work still plays a big role in their identity. Vuyo said once he showed his family a t-shirt they printed in the spirit of mobilising, the family accepted that he is a street reclaimer but they are not proud, which means “you can do better”. So while reclaimers gain confidence because of the movement, society and family still has issues with “feeding from the filth”.

However, after the reclaimer’s strike against Pikitup some community members now understand and respect reclaimers.

“After we went to the march what I have realised is that the perception of the community at large about reclaimers have changed because more people have stopped treating us like drug addicts especially after we went to the radio stations. They now understand that S@S is taking food from us.” (Nkosi, 3 August 2017)

Moemedi said that what was a major shift with how reclaimers see themselves is the t-shirts they made. Reclaimers printed t-shirts that say that they are a reclaimer from a certain area in front, and a phrase saying “reclaimers organising the future” at the back. So despite the stigmatisation of their work, reclaimers wore the t-shirts with pride, which strengthen the solidarity and confidence to openly show what their work is.

Reclaimers also have conflicts:

“The whole thing of some reclaimers saying the own streets is caused by the decrease of material so we have to compete for it.” (Tshepo, 12 July 2017)

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This new conflict originates from Pikitup's oppression and false promises. Before the strike Vuyo did not trust the reclaimers that are leading the movement, this is because previously a woman came to Bekezela claiming that she is from Pikitup and she took reclaimers' money and names saying it is for training then she just disappeared. On the issue of reclaimers fighting for streets, the sorting at source that Pikitup introduced cause a reduction in material so reclaimers started competing for material, it is not a competition or clash of identities like the social identity theory would suggest. Regardless of the source of this conflict, it is not good for reclaimers' identity and works against their efforts in trying to gain sympathy from society because it just confirms that they are thugs.

"We need people with high positions to stand for us because Pikitup sees us as nothing we are just like useless floating papers to them". (Samuel, 12 July 2017)

In agreement with the above quote, Samson (2010) argues that because of the negative perception on waste by the society, people who work with waste are stigmatised. So can one then conclude and say Pikitup people are also at the same level as reclaimers (stigmatised) too since they are now reclaiming?

4.2.2 Relationship with Pikitup

The reclaimers I worked with said that Pikitup is a government institution that collects waste and dump it in the landfills. Furthermore their relationship with Pikitup is non-existent because at the start Pikitup was just dumping the waste in the landfills and then they would just do their reclaiming in peace. But now that Pikitup have implemented programmes that take their jobs like S@S, the relationship with Pikitup is bad especially because Pikitup does not even consult them.

Separation at source (s@s) is Pikitup's programme that is mandated to reduce and deviate waste from the landfills as well as keeping the city of Johannesburg clean (Pikitup, 2017). S@S encourages residents to use the 3 receptable model to separate their waste by putting different types of dry waste in different reusable bags provided by Pikitup such that only unrecyclable waste will be in the usual black bag (Pikitup, 2017). To run this programme, Pikitup teamed up with established companies including Collect-a-Can and PETCO (Pikitup). These companies continuously engage and work with reclaimers where reclaimers just collect the waste in the bags provided by Pikitup from residents' homes, further more Pikitup encourages reclaimers to sell the waste to S@S buy-back centres (Pikitup, 2017). While Pikitup claims there is this relationship between the companies signed under S@S and

reclaimers, when asked why reclaimers started the movement against Pikitup's S@S plans they responded:

"I used to work in Parkview because there was a lot of material, it did not even matter how many other reclaimers were on the same street with me. But then we realised that the material was decreasing and we just moved on to other locations, I did not connect the dots that it was S@S because when it was still a concept I heard that it is a good thing for us, I did not really understand what it is" (Tshepo, 12 July 2017)

"If it was not WIEGO we would not have known what exactly is going on, all we noticed is that material has reduced. So I do not know how WIEGO knew that Pikitup is taking our work via S@S, but I know they do research. But if they did not tell us we would have lost our job completely, with the help of Moemedi now we need to fight for our work" (Samuel, 12 July 2017)

Through the theory of epistemic dispossession by Samson (2015), we can see how street reclaimers feel dispossessed of their rightfully deserved intellectual property because they have been working with waste for a long time like Vuyo who started in 1996.

*"After being active in the movement what I understand about Pikitup is that it is a capitalism body that is taking my **bread**"* (Tshepo, 12 July 2017)

While reclaimers view waste as a commodity (bread), some people see it as a filthy, demeaning object that should be separate from oneself (Moore, 2012). However the above quote shows that recently because of the monetary value of waste the perception might have changed, because the reclaimer said when he started reclaiming Pikitup did not bother him. Basically they just took waste and dumped it into the landfills separating it from the society but now they also collect and sell it. This links to the theory of dispossession by accumulation, because Pikitup is capturing the new area of accumulation created by reclaimers therefore dispossessing them, and threatening their livelihood (Samson, 2015)

When Pikitup implemented S@S there are people they employed, whom they admitted that might not be reclaimers. Reclaimers confirmed this by saying that they actually know most of them and they know that they are not reclaimers. These people are referred to by reclaimers as Pikitup waste pickers.

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“I have not personally crossed paths with the Pikitup waste pickers, but many others here have come across them and returned with nothing, because the Pikitup staff have taken everything they have collected.” (Nkosi, 12 July 2017)... “While I work I do meet with the Pikitup waste pickers and they claim that all the recyclables belong to them even though we started reclaiming a long time ago before the S@S programme which has been running +-4 years, yes I have been reclaiming since 1996.” (Vuyo, 12 July 2017)

Samson (2010) argue that the negative perception of waste promotes of resclaimers. The quotes above show that despite this, Pikitup reclaimers feel they are superior to street reclaimers even though they are both working with waste.

According to Moemedi, what the experience of organising did is that it confirmed the overwhelming feeling that reclaimers have towards Pikitup. The feeling that they have is basically that Pikitup is interfering with their work and giving it to private companies owned by rich people. So because of the movement the feeling that reclaimers could not articulate was legitimated, that they have a right to exist and do their work without being dispossessed because they are not stealing from anyone .But also they was a little bit of hope, because of how Pikitup’s managing director responded to them.

After the strike, reclaimers said that they were very happy that they worked hard until they got the attention of Pikitup. The response that the Managing director of Pikitup gave was good to them, it gave them hope. However they also said they they cannot be complete comfortable because the managing director is a politician he knows how to respond to masses, what to say, how and when.

4.3 Organising

Organising is a process where people come together with the same motivation to achieve a common goal (Akrani, 2011). Moemedi echoed this:

“Organising is basically about recognising the necessity to acting in solidarity which means recognising common interests, And importantly democracy and accountability is a key part of it” (Moemedi, 3 November 2017)

Moemedi explained earlier on that reclaimers have been organising since the 1960s but S@S triggered organising against Pikitup because of its implications to reclaimers work. This is because the reusable bags that residents use to separate waste are kept for Pikitup i.e.

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residents only take them out when the Pikitup trucks arrives, so reclaimers have no access to the waste. The reclaimers who work in the landfills also suffer because S@S diverts waste away from the landfills.

According to Moemedi the approach to the organisation was to capitalise of the issue of S@S which made it easy to organise reclaimers, because evidently without an issue organising was taking time and in doing this the emphases was the right to democracy and solidarity. And the main strategy was to have regular meetings in the most primary fashion as possible. But to get reclaimers the only way is to go into the street and meet the people, explain what is going on and invite them to the meetings. Other strategies were workshops like the one I attended where I met Tshepo, reclaimer also got interviews with radio stations and lastly they got legal representation and advice from SERI.

Vuyo said that his method was to:

“Speak to reclaimers I meet on the street , most reclaimers I meet sorting places then I show them how things have changed and the reason why which is basically because Pikitup is taking our jobs. When I inform people they all understand in different ways but the main understanding is that we have to fight, and there are those who are not interested but there is only a few of them.” (Vuyo, 12 July 2017)

All the reclaimers I interviewed have the same organising strategy as Vuyo, but like any other organisation they also have challenges. Nkosi said:

“It is difficult to organise reclaimers because some think us as the leadership are using them to get money, and also we have reclaimers who are foreigners with no identity documents so they are always worried about being deported. But with the support that we have from Moemedi, WEIGO and SERI (Socio- Economic Rights Institute) we will be alright” (Nkosi, 12 July 2017).

When I got to spend a day with the 4 reclaimers from Bekezela organising in the street we faced some challenges. Most of the reclaimers who did not want to even listen to the organisers were immigrants, and a few that have poor educational background. But the t-shirts that reclaimers were wearing helped in convincing other reclaimers to join the movement. Reclaimers with good educational background responded quicker to the invitation and were actually excited. On this day the reclaimers were energetic i.e. at no point did we lose steam or motivation to find more reclaimers. I think what kept us going is referring to the

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strike as “ntwa”, they kept on saying “re ya ntweng” (which is a Sesotho phrase for *we are going to war*) when inviting other reclaimers. Other difficulties that Moemedi mentioned is that when he started he had an idea of meeting reclaimers at the buyback centres but then that did not because buyback centres are high pressure place where reclaimers are there to sell and leave. Another issue is the violence created by the Basotho gangs and other reclaimers, because it creates an unsafe environment.

In the meetings, the main objective was always to discuss what the next step in organising is. But also during the meeting other issues would come up, for example health care issues, certain reclaimers evicted from a landfill etc. So the meetings created an environment where reclaimers listen to each other’s challenges, give each other advice, give mandates to the leadership and receive feedback when it is due.

Before the strike reclaimers also held meetings with SERI for legal advice to get advice on what they are legally allowed to do during the strike, when to consult the police and what is needed . The elected committee of reclaimers also held meetings to discuss the logistics of the strike in terms of what is lacking and what needs to be done. Importantly they were helping each other with organising skills and how to handle conflict with reclaimers that might respond violently. There also transport arrangements for reclaimers who stay far. On the 13th of July, reclaimers took the streets of Braamfontein in hundreds of numbers to protest against Pikitup’s S@S. The purpose of the strike was to grab the publics and media attention, but ultimately they were going to deliver their demands to Pikitup. They prepared a document that outlined their demands, these demands were:

- **Registration:** Reclaimers want to be registered in a database to be recognized and protected against harassment by authorities and the public, who often view them as criminals.
- **Compensation:** for service provision, contribution to the economy and environment
- **Safety and Security:** Personal safety is a concern, as well as the need for safe storage space for their materials.
- **Dignity and Respect:** Waste pickers’ work needs to be valued and respected by all stakeholders.
- **Transparency:** All city projects, programmes, and service provider changes need to be discussed openly.
- **Sorting and Storage:** Facilities with decent infrastructure, such as decent toilets, showers, and clean drinking water, are needed

(Carr, 2017, p.1)

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Reclaimers were received by the managing director of Pikitup. He said that he knows that they started on the wrong foot but he is happy that now he know who to talk to regarding reclaimers work. He also said that what reclaimers are fighting for they actually deserve because of the good work they do for the community. And for reclaimers it was a victory because a week and half after the strike, the managing director communicated that he stopped the process of signing private companies and he recognise reclaimers as principle stakeholders in the city's waste economy. The managing director actually arranged and led a workshop for reclaimers that took place on the 10th of August, which initiated a proper way of engaging between reclaimers and Pikitup.



Image 4. Joburg reclaimers march in protest of municipal recycling contracts that don't include them. Photo: WIEGO (2017).

4.4 Reclaimer Integration

As mentioned earlier on Scheinberg et al. (2016) refers to integration as

“A situation where recycling is a recognised official occupation, and informal recyclers have a legal identity, are protected by laws and decrees, covered by social protection schemes, and increasingly paid for the value of the service they are delivering to the city and the environment” (p. 822). But despite the use of the word integration harmony is not guaranteed during the process of achieving integration.

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When asked how he understand integration and what has been the common view from the reclaimers, Moemedi said that:

“I do not think I understand what integration is and actually no one does, but from our point of view the states integration means displacing us and giving our jobs to private companies because all the programmes they implemented claiming that it is for integration has dispossessed us. But what reclaimers understand integration to be is that Pikitup and the city of Johannesburg must integrate themselves into us because we have been reclaiming for a long time and it is working, and they can do this by changing their law for example the very existence of a reclaimer in the landfill is illegal while all the stats they get about waste in the landfills is processed by reclaimers” (Moemedi, 3 November 2017)

Basically what Moemedi is saying is that, the programmes that have been implemented in the name of “integrating reclaimers” have been dispossessing them, e.g. S@S preventing them from accessing waste. According to him what reclaimers understand integration to be is the state integrating itself to them. This is because reclaimers have argued that they have been reclaiming for a long time, before Pikitup viewed waste as a commodity therefore they know a lot about their work. So what should happen is that the state must integrate themselves by recognising reclaimers and changing their system, for example their by-laws.

In 2009 the city of Johannesburg and Pikitup introduced S@S and as mentioned earlier on this programme was meant to help fight unemployment by contracting small businesses which can provide different services in the city (Ndlangamandla, 2010). And waste reclaimers were supposed to be integrated by working under the waste management cooperatives signed under S@S (Ndlangamandla, 2010). According to Bekezela reclaimers, the city of Johannesburg and Pikitup did not consult or engage with them before S@S was implemented even though they requested a meeting with Pikitup before S@S was implemented:

“I have never got any communication from Pikitup or have heard other reclaimers saying Pikitup communicated with them” (Tshepo, 12 July 2017)

Like Tshepo, none of the other 3 reclaimers said they received communication from Pikitup about anything relating to their work. The importance of public participation is that it ensures that any development employed is in the true sense for the public. Shiva Kumar says that if you would enquire why projects fail in different countries around the world, many will tell

you that they did not achieve the interventions planned (Rahulkepapa, 2011). Kumar argues that the reason these project fail is that the people on the ground have no say about the projects even though they are meant to impact their lives (Rahulkepapa, 2011). The absence of communication from Pitup of city of Johannesburg is the major reason projects like S@S failing to serve reclaimers.

“But if we were to work with Pikitup, the first I would like is that whether its integration or whatever programme they have they must sit down with us and then we define integration from our point of view and theirs because we have been recycling for a long time we know the job.” (Tshepo, 12 July 2017)

If Pikitup wants to redeem itself in the eyes of the reclaimers, public participation should be their priority. As Tshepo mentions in the quote above, Pikitup must include them such that their point of view or understanding of integration is taken into consideration. In addition, reclaimers have been doing their job for a very long time, some even before any “waste management” programmes were implemented. So they knowledge can help Pikitup to ensure that what they implementation of future programmes is actually inclusive and relevant to the needs and demands of reclaimers.

Depending on the understanding of integration, there are small differences of what each reclaimer wants from integration. However the common idea is that Pikitup shoould go back to its olden ways of working and just dump the waste at the landfills and let them reclaim.

“In my understanding their issue is that they want report on how much waste they dump or how much material is recycled and because we don’t give them that they want to take our jobs. So what they should do is take us to the places that they are trying to clean up, we will collect and sort give them report on how much we took then go sell where we usually sell but they must also give us money for helping to clean the landfills.” (Nkosi, 12 July 2017)

Nkosi, understands that the idea is to reduce waste in the landfills. He proposed that reclaimers to the work of reducing waste in the landfills and they will give a report of how much they collected, but importantly they should get paid for doing that besides them selling the waste.

4.5 Conceptualisation of waste

To the reclaimers I worked with, waste is a potential commodity. It is what puts bread on their table every day, and they do not see it as something they should separate themselves from. Moore (2012) argues waste is increasingly being viewed as a parallax object. Thieme (2010) argue:

“Waste has become both a source of income generation and a way to provide a service to communities where public service provision is otherwise absent” (p. 333).

Initially some reclaimers were not confident in disclosing what they do for a living because of “what will people say”. But In all the interviews I did after the strike, not once did a reclaimer refer to the items they collect as waste. The common terms they used is ‘material’ and “Pikitup is taking our bread”. Therefore reclaimers experienced two facets of waste, where first it was a thing they work with that make them look bad in the society. Later on they started viewing it as their source of income, they bread and also a way to help the community.

“Earlier on, Pikitup just collected waste and dump it in the landfills, but now they collect waste and sell besides us at the buyback centres”. (Tshepo, 12 July 2017)

What Tshepo is highlighting is that, Pikitup was not interested in waste other just dumping it in the landfill, so their sudden interest further proves and confirm his new perception that waste is indeed a commodity. So the overall conceptualisation of waste by reclaimers is that it is a resource they use to make a living.

Chapter 5- Conclusion

This paper has introduced the problem statement and the main research question. Importantly the paper has also engaged with relevant literature to the themes the paper focused on. With the description of the methodology and methods that paper has outline how the main research question will be answered. Applying the concepts and theories relevant to the project, results were analysed and discussed. The key contribution of this paper is, how organising influenced reclaimers understanding of themselves and integration.

Reclaimers described Pikitup as a government institution that collects waste and dump it in the landfill, or at least that is what Pikitup used to do. They said that their relationship with Pikitup is bad because of S@S, and they would like S@S to stop and pikitup to consult them with anything regarding their work. Reclaimers did not seem to understand what integration is but they know what they would like integration to be. The main research question asked

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how organising influenced two key components, one is the relationship between reclaimers and Pikitup, and the other is how reclaimers understand integration.

The relationship between Pikitup and reclaimers did not change, and actually what reclaimers said is that the experienced of organising legitimised the perception and feeling they always had and could not articulate. But from organising they got to understand more about the waste management sector and consequently their understanding of integration graduated from “leave us alone” where initially all they wanted was things to go back the way they were, to a more informed vision of what they can achieve with integration which included benefits like pension after retirement.

But after their strike and the way the managing director of Pikitup responded, reclaimers said that they are happy because that has never happened before so it brought hope that things will change for the better. Even though they were a bit sceptical because of the bad experiences they, reclaimers said that they feel like their job is as important to the managing director as it is to them. Therefore they will just have to meet the managing director halfway and see what happens. Additionally, they mentioned how everything is now written in black and which gives them access to key people in Pikitup and from that they expect things to be a bit better.

When it comes to the identity, reclaimers said that the attention they got from the society because of the radio interviews they had built they confidence because residents called basically shows sympathy and gained an understand of who reclaimers are. Thus this mean that the stigma will slowly die. And also the effort by the Pikitup managing director to host a workshop for them showed how much he takes their job serious which then gave them the first step of the recognition they always wanted. And lastly organisation made them united and even some conflicts they had are resolved which grows their confidence as reclaimers.

One major issue that the city of Johannesburg and Pikitup has is how to integrate the reclaimers that are illegal immigrants. This is important because reclaimers mentioned that they know they have colleagues that are illegal immigrants however they still their brothers and sisters in the same struggle. Therefore in conclusion, an area of interest could be how to give immigrant reclaimers working permits while they do not want to be employees.

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