

WASTE RDI ROADMAP SOUTH AFRICA

Lessons from waste picker integration Initiatives in South Africa

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science & innovation

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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JOHANNESBURG



Section 1

Introduction and Project Overview



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Project background

Funded by:

- Department of Science and Innovation Waste Research, Development and Innovation Roadmap
- Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF)

Time-frame – 2016 – 2019

Two components

1. Research
2. Stakeholder development of DEFF's Guideline on Waste Picker Integration for South Africa

Research team from University of the Witwatersrand

- Primary investigator (M. Samson), 9 honours students, 7 master's students, postdoc, researcher + 3 independent researchers

Research reports available at:

<https://wasteroadmap.co.za/completed-projects/evidence-based-guidelines-to-integrate-waste-pickers/>

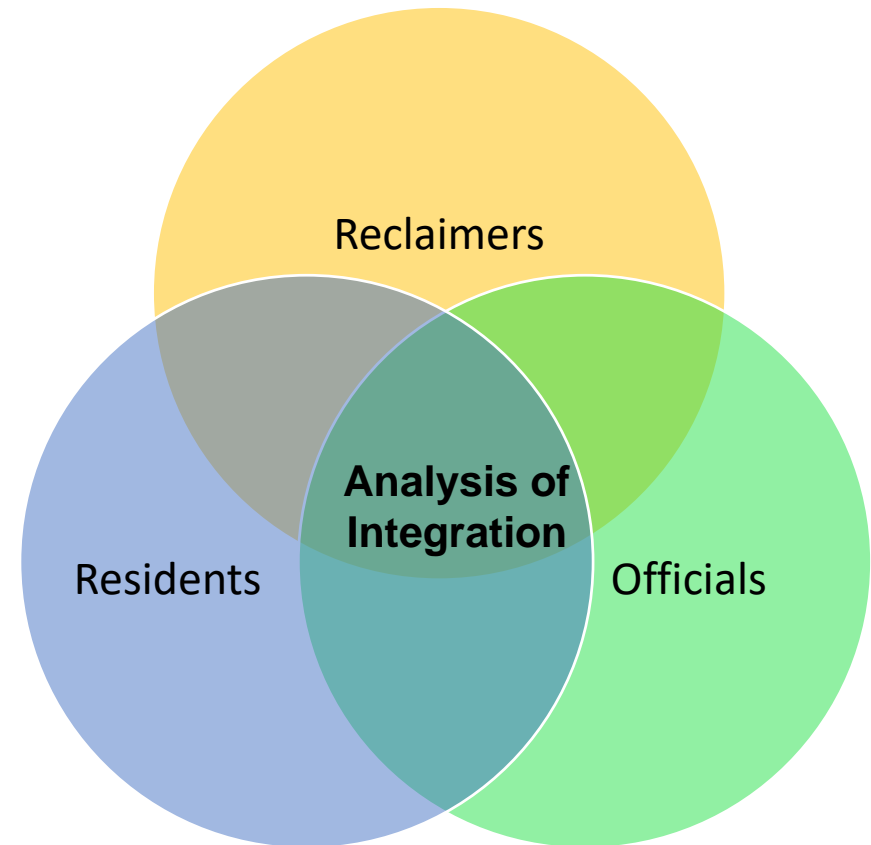
Research project

Holistic analysis

- Qualitative case studies in Johannesburg and Metsimaholo.
- Focused on experiences of reclaimers, officials and residents in each municipality.

Methods

- Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participatory mapping, ethnography, observation, time-line interviews, reflexive diaries, policy analysis.
- Over 370 semi-structured interviews.



Section 2

Research Findings



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First understand what exists: Separation Outside Source (SoS)

- WPs created a well-functioning SoS system long before government interest in 3Rs.
- WPs collect 80-90% of all household recyclables inserted into value chain & save municipalities up to R748 million/year in landfill airspace (Godfrey et al., 2016)
- WPs also save municipalities transport and labour costs.
- Municipalities and industry benefit, but don't pay for the collection service. WPs only earn very low prices from sale.



Diagram by M. Samson, D. Seegers and J. van den Bussche

But, policies and programmes in the two municipalities didn't acknowledge SoS

Context - General disregard for activities seen as informal

Not taking SoS into account led to:

- Lost opportunity to draw lessons from SoS experience
- Lost opportunity to build on strengths of SoS
- Policy and programmes not evidence-based
- Inappropriate programmes, so funds not put to best use
- Profoundly negative effects for reclaimers
- Negative effects for the municipalities, residents, companies, industry
- Success of programmes undermined
- Resistance

Policies and plans

Both municipalities

- Early years - eradicating reclaimers
- unemployed prioritised to work in new recycling projects – took away reclaimers' jobs in the name of job creation
- Coops only route to integration.

Metsimaholo

- No policy
- Focused on removing from landfill & preventing work at new one.
- Note – many other challenges due to political instability, significant general service delivery problems, waste management not prioritised + limited budget and staff

Johannesburg – Pushed out by Pikitup

YEAR	DEVELOPMENT
2001	Pikitup created – recycling not part of its mandate
2011	IWMP – “should embrace and engage existing reclaimers”.
2011	Council “Reclaimer Empowerment Plan” - recognised role in SWM, reducing waste to landfill & saving money. This recognition disappeared quickly.
2012 - 2015	Recycling moved to heart of Pikitup - business model “Extracting Value from Waste”; goal to establish a recycling economy (from IDP); new corporate goal – realisation of value throughout the waste value chain. Effects for reclaimers not considered
2014	Jozi@Work community coops given responsibility for S@S across the city
2015	After lobbying, business given responsibility for S@S in mid- and high income areas
2015	First time reclaimers recognised as stakeholder. Only group in “minimal effort category”
2015	Reclaimer integration defined as “The incorporation of reclaimers into the value chain of S@S”. But coops and business responsible for integration. Pikitup outsourced integration to coops and businesses with no guidance, targets or M&E.

Integration programmes

1. Johannesburg – Top down projects

- EISD Empowerment programmes (trolleys, training, PPE, needs analysis, video, forum)
- EISD and Pikitup cooperative support
- Pikitup integration into S@S projects

2. Metsimaholo – PPP

- initiated by Sasol – supported reclaimer coops in Zamedela

3. Metsimaholo – Sideways integration

- Vaal Park Recycling Centre and S@S by Ikageng-Ditamating coop
- Collaboration between industry association and SAWPA – brought government in.

4. Metsimaholo – de facto programmes

- Creativity by officials in absence of official programmes

5. Johannesburg - Reclaimer self-integration

- African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) Resident-Reclaimer S@S

Challenges faced by officials

When I attend conferences, all I hear when people speak is how municipalities are not participating, but they never think about what leads to those circumstances”

(Senior official, Fezile Dabi District Municipality)

Challenges faced by officials

1. Reclaimers low priority
2. Not in KPIs (or extremely limited)
3. Inadequate policy
4. Limited time and budget
5. Lacked seniority to make decisions
6. Outside areas of expertise
7. No education to develop expertise
8. Needed other departments to assist
9. No guidelines, examples, templates, support from national government
10. No national targets
11. Forced to be creative to get funds (eg EPWP) but then criticized
12. Felt reclaimers didn't understand their challenges and constraints
13. Daily challenges – reclaimers sleeping and sorting in parks and open spaces, road hazards, resident complaints etc

Framing Reclaimers – Six Erasures

- Policies, programmes, and reclaimers' relationships and experiences shaped by six fundamental erasures.
- Erasure of reclaimers':
 1. knowledge and expertise
 2. profession and place in the sector
 3. SoS system and contributions
 4. needs and interests
 5. full personhood (infantilisation)
 6. dignity
- Reclaimers felt disrespected, disregarded and undermined and were profoundly negatively affected by these erasures.

Adopted Charity Approach to Integration

1. Reclaimers are poor, marginalised people who require charitable support (rather than payment for service provision).
2. Reclaimers should be integrated via special projects (rather than systemic interventions).
3. Reclaimers perform simple, manual labour and do not possess knowledge relevant to official recycling programmes.
4. Reclaimers should not be involved in decision-making regarding their own integration or separation at source.
5. Officials and professionals know best how reclaimers should be integrated and how to implement integration and separation at source.
6. Reclaimers should be compliant, appreciative participants in integration projects designed for them by officials and professionals.

Effects of the charity approach in Joburg

Training

“This [training] is helpful for less than 3 percent of us and some of the stuff is hard to understand for my colleagues”

Equipment

“You don’t know the trolley, you don’t push it. We push it on a daily basis. You made trolleys without handles. You need to know why we choose what we choose”

Being part of an integration project they did not design

“...we were told what to do actually, it wasn’t our choice. It was not someone who woke up in the morning and thought, look, let me start something on my own. So it’s like forcing someone into something he doesn’t understand. So for me it never worked and for the other guys it never worked”

Earning less in integration project

“I stopped working through cooperatives [in the integration pilot] because the working hours allocated to use the truck are less; when I work by myself I cover way more hours and make more money for myself.”

Reclaimers, Officials & Residents actively shaped integration

Officials

- Practical norms and de facto strategies esp Metsimaholo

Reclaimers

- Contested, negotiated, and forged own approaches to integration (eg VPRC and Resident-Reclaimer)

Residents

- Wasters
- Agnostics
- Enforcers
- Community integrators
- Competitors

Lack of participation in official S@S didn't mean weren't separating.
Had own ideas re who should collect and sell.



Photos courtesy of PETCO

Informal approach to integration

- Applies to municipalities, industry associations and Sasol
- Integration projects with cooperatives:
 - No detailed proposals
 - No contracts
 - No detailed implementation or financial sustainability plans
 - No monitoring, evaluation and revisions systems
 - No dispute resolution mechanisms
 - Lack of transparency re budgets (except VPRC)
- Pilots – no end dates, ways to extract lessons or next stages

The paradox of cooperatives

- Coops only modality for integration.
- Majority who didn't want to be in coops left out.
- Required reclaimers to form coops, but then inadequate support:
 - not paid for service
 - no start-up capital
 - inappropriate training and mentorship
 - lack of systems, plans and incubation
 - blamed for not being fully functional in short period

“when we started we told them (cooperatives) that the project is for one year, Pikitup will help you up to a certain point. From there you have to sustain yourself, but they cannot sustain themselves (Pikitup official)

Cooperatives created new problems

“People thought that by virtue of registering the cooperative it meant that all our problems would be solved and we would be successful overnight...They say that I fetched them from their homes and told them to sign up for a cooperative and this cooperative isn’t working for us so we want our money back and we want to be removed from the certificate” (leader of cooperative in the Metsimaholo PPP project)

Social & spatial difference

- Reclaimers seen as homogenous.
- Integration biased as didn't address specific needs
- Street vs landfill
- Landfill reclaimers
 - Goal of S@S is to stop recyclables going to landfills.
 - Loss of all income for landfill reclaimers not addressed
- Non-South Africans
 - Excluded, but significant part of the system in Joburg
 - Continued working
 - Inaccurate stats, programmes not based on full information, negative effects for reclaimers and success of programmes

Social and Spatial Difference - Gender

- Lack of ablution facilities and public toilets
 - “as women even if it is that time of the month we still visit the bush, without proper places to dispose of our sanitary wear and wash our hands” (woman landfill reclaimer in Joburg)
- Men dominated high value materials
- Materials stolen and robbed when sold
- Reduced working time and area due to fear of crime
- Integration must integrate all reclaimers, create equity



Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik, courtesy of WIEGO

Integration includes industry

“We don’t want things going above us any longer...The main goal for us is to own the means of production, we need to be able to own the entire value chain from separation at source to producing products such as tissue with the white paper we collect. We’ve become smarter and more informed about this entire industry so we deserve more out of it than just being the collectors and separators” (Coop leader, Metsimaholo)

Centrality of Race and Racism

“Yes of course, it’s economic racism at its best...As long as one wants to promote recycling, one doesn’t promote it by funding the bottom tier of the pyramid only and doing nothing more than that. At the end of the day, you are still supporting the white industry with the nation’s investment. If one is really serious about investing in this industry, one has to invest from the bottom up....”(SAWPA rep)

“...honestly we are very afraid working in white communities, sometimes the residents are nice and welcoming but in some cases they chase us away. So we are just trying our luck with them because their areas have a lot of recyclables” (Metsimaholo street reclaimer)

Reclaimer integration is about power

Reclaimer integration involves addressing and eradicating power relations and inequalities between:

- reclaimers and government, industry, and other parties
- reclaimers themselves
- parts of the economy framed as formal and informal.



Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik, courtesy of WIEGO

Separation at source (S@S) dispossessed and 'disintegrated' reclaimers

- company (or community coop) was paid to collect recyclables via S@S
- SoS and reclaimers pushed out by the company
- reclaimers had to keep working to survive. Fewer materials and not paid for collection.
- incomes, working conditions & relationships with some residents deteriorated.
- criminalised
- dignity compromised
- same occurs if reclaimer coop provides the service and local street reclaimers not included.

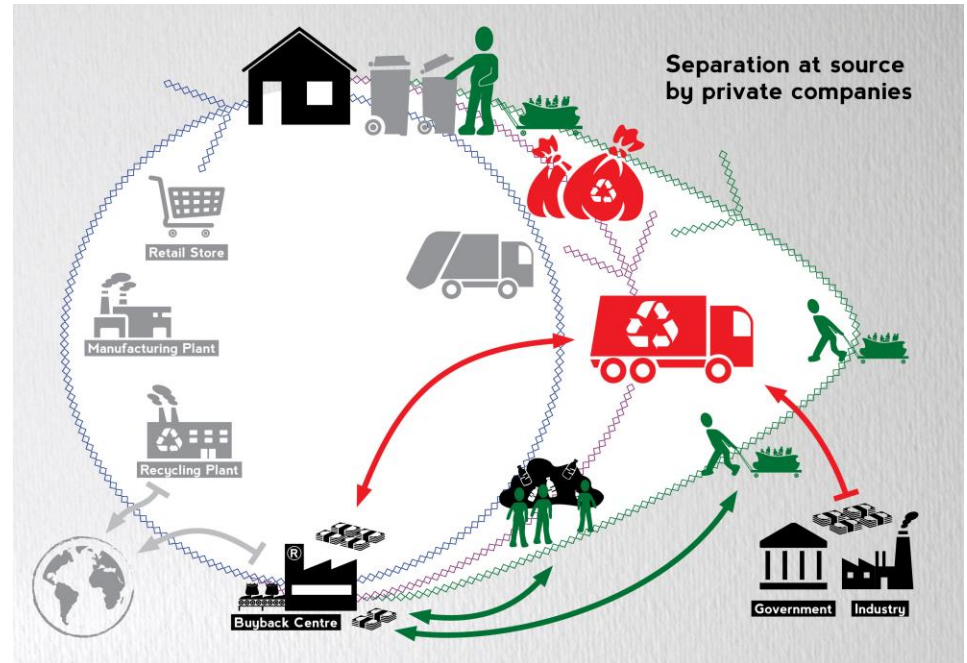


Diagram by M. Samson, D. Seegers and J. van den Bussche

Reclaimers on the effects of SoS

“We started recycling way back in the mid-nineties. Why does the municipality have to show up represented by its executives and say ‘we have to entirely take over ukubenza [your work]’?.....The problem is the municipality that wants to snatch the food out of our mouths.....What are they going to do for us if they stop us from recycling or take it away from us as theirs?” (Street reclaimer Reuben Mbabisa Manifesto)

“I do not want to be a thief, I want to find my own recyclables in peace. When they catch you stealing their plastics they beat you up, look at my eye right now they beat me up” (Street reclaimer in Zonde Soweto)

S@S overpowered integration projects - we need “Integrated S@S”

- S@S and integration were treated as separate policy spheres
- S@S was prioritised
- S@S overpowered small integration and empowerment projects
- S@S & integration are inextricably linked
- need “integrated S@S”



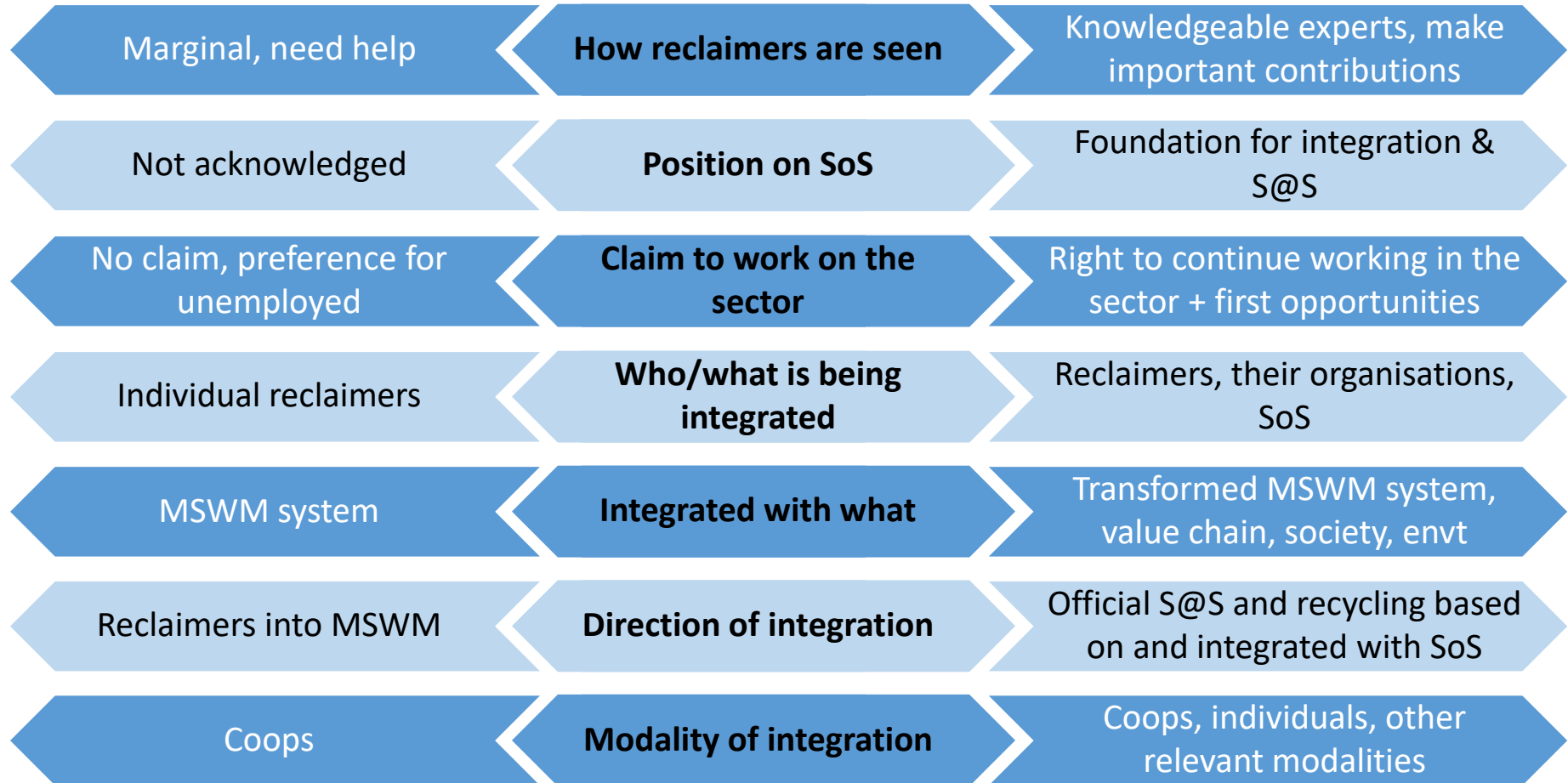
Photo courtesy of PETCO

Reclaimer Integration Spectrum

- Integration and S@S encountered problems and caused conflicts as the municipalities, industry and Sasol (as the PPP partner in Metsimaholo) adopted significantly different positions from reclaimers on the spectrum and enforced these.
- The research revealed:
 - Integration and S@S are not neutral or technical.
 - Forms of integration and S@S are based on political choices
 - We need explicit discussions and agreements on positions on the spectrum.

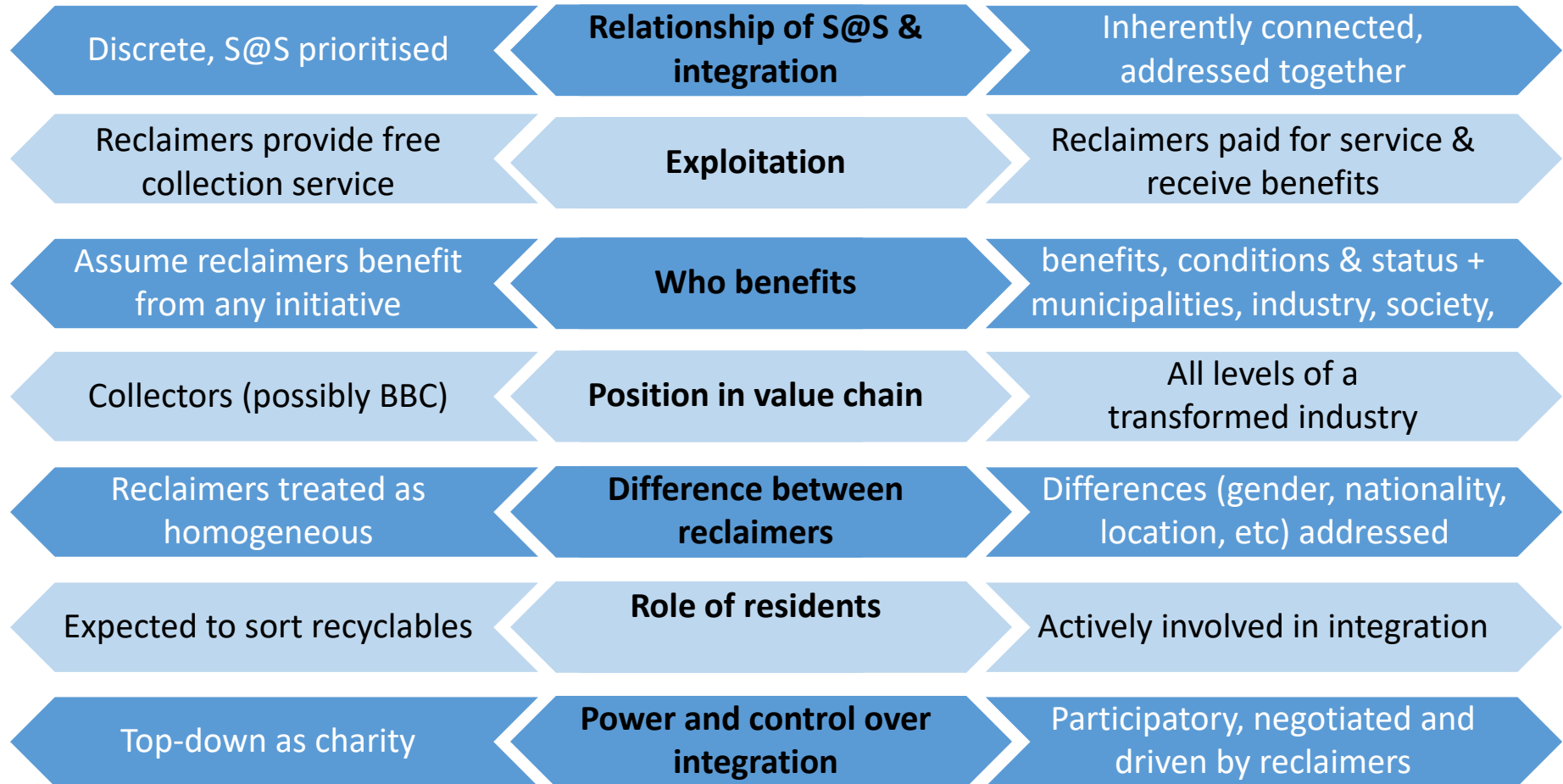
Integration spectrum – Where do we choose to be?

Aspect of Integration



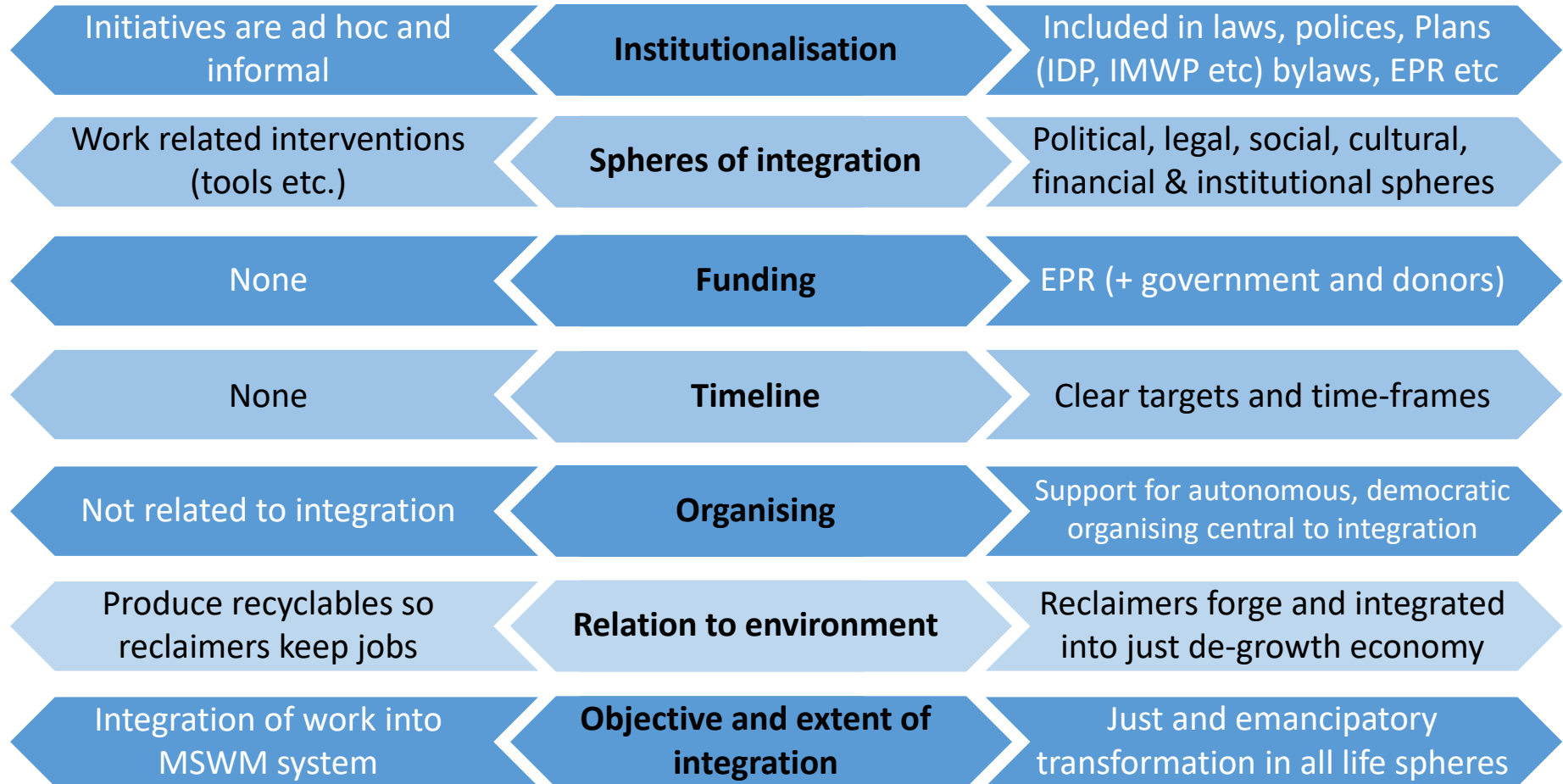
Integration spectrum – Where do we choose to be?

Aspect of Integration



Integration spectrum – Where do we choose to be?

Aspect of Integration



7 Integration Questions

Who/what is being integrated with what, why, how, when, by whom and in whose interest?



Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik, courtesy of WIEGO

Some recommendations (for all parties)

1. Reject and invert the charity model.
2. Respect & value reclaimers, their knowledge and experience
3. Learn and build from what exists (reclaimers & SoS)
4. Explicitly recognise and transform power relations
5. Agree on a process to collaborate, negotiate and implement a reclaimer integration plan and programme
6. Negotiate all aspects of integration and S@S with reclaimers.
7. Agree answers to the 7 questions & positions on integration spectrum
8. Understand the S@S is not neutral.
9. Adopt “integrated S@S” and “integrated EPR”

Some recommendations cont.

10. Redress harm from existing programmes and revise them.
11. Pay reclaimers for the services provided
12. Support reclaimers who want coops + alternative ways to integrate
13. Engage residents as people who make political decisions re what to do with their recyclables and who are part of forging integration & SoS
14. Support local government and officials (funding, time, training, templates, facilitation, specialised staff, targets)
15. Measures to integrate all reclaimers (gender, location, nationality)
16. Support organising & reclaimers' integration initiatives & ideas
17. Develop coherent policies & programmes & institutionalise integration.
18. Adopt a holistic approach to reclaimer integration design and implementation

Concluding thoughts

- Integration is about:
 - integrating reclaimers and SoS into our thinking and planning
 - integrating the SoS system as the foundation for formally planned recycling systems
 - integrating reclaimers as whole people
 - forging the future – integrating all parties into the just de-growth economy, polity, society, and environment we want to create
- Integration provides an opportunity to see, think, plan and act differently, based on current realities vs abstract models, and opens a window to much deeper transformation.

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