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## The third sector in promoting recycling in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais: a systematic literature review

*The third sector in promoting recycling in the City of Belo Horizonte MG: a systematic review of the literature*

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### SUMMARY

This article is a literature review on the importance of the Third Sector regarding recycling in the capital of Minas Gerais, highlighting the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in solid waste management. This work encompasses studies of articles and books related to recycling in Belo Horizonte, analyzing how these organizations contribute to sustainability, improving the socioeconomic conditions of recyclable waste pickers, and the challenges these professionals face in their work. This study clearly demonstrates the improved quality of life these organizations provide to their members and their families. It also highlights the contribution the Third Sector makes to the environment.

Through this article, it can be seen that the actions of the Third Sector interfere, in a significant way, in the implementation of public recycling policies, however there is still a need for articulation between civil society, private initiative and public authorities.

**Keywords:** environment; selective collection; NGOs; Belo Horizonte; third sector.

### ABSTRACT

This article is a literature review on the importance of the Third Sector regarding recycling in the capital of Minas Gerais, highlighting the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in solid waste management. This work encompasses studies of articles and books related to recycling in Belo Horizonte, analyzing how these organizations contribute to sustainability, improving the socioeconomic conditions of recyclable waste pickers, and the challenges these professionals face in their work. This study clearly demonstrates the improved quality of life these organizations provide to their members and their families. It also highlights the contribution the Third Sector makes to the environment. This article reveals that Third Sector actions significantly influence the implementation of public recycling policies, but there is still a need for coordination between civil society, the private sector, and the government.

**Keywords:** environment; selective collection; NGOs; Belo Horizonte; third sector.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Third Sector, represented by non-profit organizations, has played a very important role important in promoting recycling in large urban centers. In the city of Belo Horizonte (MG), the work of NGOs and cooperatives has proven to be of fundamental importance for the administration

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of solid waste, contributing to reducing environmental impact and providing income for those who work with recyclable materials. In addition, associations and cooperatives collectors, who are part of the Third Sector, are a means for environmental education aimed at selective collection (Torres, 2008, p. 15).

This article aims to carry out a systematic review of the literature on the subject, analyzing: the relationship between recycling in the capital of Minas Gerais and the Third Sector; public policies in Belo Horizonte and the performance of these organizations; the evolution and concept of the Third Sector in Brazil; the challenges and future prospects.

The literature shows that, in recent decades, this sector has increased its activity, however, it still faces problems such as the lack of professionalism of its management team and the lack of sustainability financial. The lack of qualified professionals in the administration of these entities harms their performance, as dependence on volunteers without management expertise results in problems such as poor organization and inefficiency (Fischer; Falconer, 2018, p. 112).

As Santos and Lima (2018) state, the Third Sector emerges as an essential space for building a more just society, acting where the State cannot reach and where the market has no interest. Its capacity for social mobilization and innovation in public policies becomes a key player in sustainable development.

According to Silva (2008, p. 14), the organizations that make up this sector include cooperatives, mutualist associations, and social enterprises, which seek to balance economic and social objectives.

The relevance of the topic is so great that at no point is it intended to exhaust the subject, but rather to show a little of the grandeur of this content for the well-being of the population of Belo Horizonte.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

This is a bibliographical research, which seeks to understand the work developed by Third Sector institutions, in the city of Belo Horizonte - MG, with the aim of knowing the specificities of the work that is focused on recycling, and mainly to analyze the importance of the Third Sector in promoting recycling in the capital of Minas Gerais. "The Third Sector in Belo Horizonte has been fundamental in promoting recycling, acting as a mediator between public authorities and local communities, encouraging selective collection and environmental education" (Santos; Ferreira, 2015, p. 134).

Several articles and books on the subject were analyzed to find out which works are developed by this sector, related to recycling. "In Belo Horizonte, projects such as 'Reciclar BH', led by non-governmental organizations, demonstrate that the articulation between civil society and public policies can increase the efficiency of recycling" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 89).



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For a better understanding of the topic, several books by various authors were part of the theoretical framework, and several articles in scientific journals, which supported the point of view on the performance of Third Sector organizations, as knowledge on the topic increased.

Costa (2017) argues that the Third Sector is essential for the economic viability of recycling in Belo Horizonte, especially through partnerships with waste pickers' cooperatives. The selection criteria analyzed articles, were texts whose themes were related to recycling in the city of Belo Horizonte, and books related to Third Sector institutions.

To carry out this work, three organizations were selected to show a little of the work of Third Sector organizations, operating in Belo Horizonte, which has a participation significant in the city's selective collection. They are: ASMARE (Association of Paper Collectors, Cardboard and Recyclable Material); the Novo Horizonte Cooperative; and AMDA (Minas Gerais Association) Environmental Protection Agency).

### **3 THIRD SECTOR CONCEPT**

The Third Sector are the organizations that complete the actions of the First Sector, represented by State, and the Second Sector, represented by the Market, with the Third Sector represented by NGOs and all institutions that do not seek profit, but rather social well-being. According to Silva et al. (2009), the Third Sector is like a set of civil society initiatives in the provision of non-profit social public policies.

### **4 THIRD SECTOR PERFORMANCE IN BRAZIL**

In Brazil, the Third Sector began to strengthen in the 1990s, with the redemocratization and increased civil society participation in public policies. In the environmental area, institutions such as Greenpeace, the Ethos Institute, and several cooperatives of recyclable waste pickers began to work to promote recycling and defend labor rights. According to Silva (2008, p. 48), many NGOs have emerged to promote social justice and workers' rights, acting as advocates and voices for the marginalized.

The Third Sector is represented by several non-profit organizations that work in various areas, such as: health, culture, community development, science, technology, innovation social, advocacy, education, sustainability, among others. It differs from the First Sector (State) and the Second Sector (Market) due to its hybrid nature, combining characteristics of private companies with the public good.

According to Fernandes (2002, p. 45), the Third Sector emerges as a response to the limitations of the



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State and market in promoting social development. Their organizations are characterized

for autonomy, flexibility and capacity for innovation, working in areas such as education, health, environment and social assistance.

The importance of the actions of the entities that make up the Third Sector is unquestionable. Dias (2018) highlights that waste picker cooperatives linked to NGOs in Belo Horizonte have increased their recycling rates, generating income and reducing environmental impact. In various areas of social life human, there are actions that are directly linked to the Third Sector, which is represented by OSCIPs (Civil Society Organizations of Public Interest); non-profit cooperatives for-profit; institutes; religious and philanthropic entities; and networks and collectives.

When these associations make a profit, it is reinvested in the organization itself. The government does not controls these institutions. It often provides financial resources to assist them in their work. Since the focus of their activities is the public good, this encourages the government and many companies private, to contribute to the causes of these associations. According to Ogando and Brito (2013), the recycling became a means of dealing with rising unemployment in Belo Horizonte at the end of the 1990s, driving the consolidation of cooperatives and associations of waste pickers in the city.

## **5 THE ROLE OF THE THIRD SECTOR IN RECYCLING IN BELO HORIZONTE**

### **5.1 CONTEXT OF THE MUNICIPALITY**

The selective collection rate in the capital of Minas Gerais is high. This number reaches 10% of the total recyclable materials in Brazil, according to data from the Urban Cleaning Service (SLU, 2021), which maintains partnerships with associations, providing a correct destination for recyclable materials.

Gomes, Carminha and Memória (2019) highlight that recycling involves both collective actors and cooperatives and associations, as well as individuals responsible for collection.

In addition to the environmental benefits, such as reducing waste in landfills, and the lower need to extract natural resources from the environment, selective collection is a means of work which provides income for many families, showing the importance of governments investing in this activity. The reduction in public funds allocated to non-profit organizations impacts directly populations in vulnerable situations, especially training projects professional, care for the elderly and children at social risk, who are the first to suffer from scarcity of resources (Oliveira; Lima, 2020).

Ferreira (2022) points out that, in Belo Horizonte, collectors not only contribute to cleaning urban, but also build collective identities, demanding rights and recognition as essential workers. The high number of recyclable materials in Belo Horizonte shows that

it is possible to value these collectors more highly, aligning the city's development with environmental preservation.

The capital of Minas Gerais stands out on the national stage for its high efficiency in selective waste collection. This excellent result, is due to the partnerships between the public authorities and the waste pickers' organizations, which provide environmentally correct disposal for waste.

## 5.2 ASSOCIATION OF RECYCLABLE MATERIAL COLLECTORS

ASMARE (Association of Paper, Cardboard and Recyclable Material Collectors) was one of the first in Brazil, founded in 1990. It constitutes an association of workers in area of materials for recycling, formed by professionals who collect garbage, promoting the collection selective.

According to Souza and Lima (2020), ASMARE stands out as a participatory management model of solid waste, integrating recyclable material collectors and promoting inclusion socioeconomic. His work in the Third Sector in Belo Horizonte demonstrates how policies public initiatives can be articulated with civil society initiatives to generate environmental impact and positive social.

One of the great contributions that this association makes to the municipality is keeping the city clean, through paper and other recyclable collectors. According to Ribeiro (2022), selective collection carried out by ASMARE prevents more than 5 thousand tons of waste per year from being deposited in landfills, directly contributing to public urban cleaning policy. In addition to this contribution, also favors social inclusion, since, for many, they represent their main source of income income. The aforementioned association seeks the socioeconomic inclusion of its professionals, in addition to promote environmental sustainability.

Like all Third Sector institutions, ASMARE's main objective is not profit.

The profit, when obtained by the association, is passed on in the form of benefits to the collectors. recyclables, and for the community in the form of social programs. Lopes and Gonçalves (2022) highlight that ASMARE stands out for initiatives such as the "Recycling Project", which combines income generation with environmental education, involving entire families in a virtuous cycle of sustainability and dignity.

This cooperative efficiently manages solid recyclables, providing collectors with a means of generating income, acting in an environmentally responsible manner. Through ASMARE, It is common for collectors to stop being informal; to have improvements in their working conditions; and access to benefits, such as retirement. In this way, the association becomes a example of how cooperation between people can change the lives of those who work with recycling.



### 5.3 COOPERATIVE OF RECYCLABLE MATERIAL COLLECTORS

The Novo Horizonte Cooperative is made up of recyclable material collectors who work in Northeast region of the capital of Minas Gerais. Its main work consists of sorting waste and has training projects for waste pickers. According to Gonçalves-Dias and Moura (2012), the Organizing cooperatives helps collectors escape social invisibility, guaranteeing rights labor and reducing environmental impacts, in addition to strengthening the solidarity economy as alternative to the informal sector.

From the moment a worker becomes a member, he begins to belong to a collective organized. According to Santos (2022), cooperatives like Novo Horizonte represent a model collaborative work, where workers, by joining together, gain autonomy and better income, in addition to strengthening the local community.

This organization seeks to value the dignity of work and care for our environment. environment, doing sustainable work. According to Gomes and Lima (2020), the adoption of practices sustainable in the Third Sector can bring both environmental and social benefits, such as demonstrates the experience of the Novo Horizonte organization in Belo Horizonte, where the training of collaborators in eco-efficiency contributed to the reduction of negative environmental impacts and to the strengthening the institution's social mission.

Novo Horizonte also offers its members administrative and legal assistance, giving them its employees greater negotiating power for the sale of their recyclable materials.

According to Oliveira (2021, p.89),

Legal assistance to waste pickers is essential to guarantee access to basic rights, such as formalization of cooperatives, defense against labor violations and confrontation of social invisibility. In cities like Belo Horizonte, legal advice initiatives have been determinants to ensure the legal recognition of these workers.

Novo Horizonte carries out projects that empower employees, providing them with training, with the objective of improving the effectiveness of their work; the safety of their operations; and improving their opportunities in the professional field. Thus, it contributes to an improvement in purchasing power of its collaborators.

In addition to reducing the volume of waste that goes to the landfill, this cooperative also promotes environmental awareness and social inclusion. Its management is democratic and sustainable. Novo Horizonte's care for the environment serves as a paradigm for other

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organizations, showing that recycling is a means of ecological and economic transformation.

#### 5.4 ECOLOGICAL SOCIETIES OF RECYCLABLE MATERIAL COLLECTORS

In the capital of Minas Gerais, many Third Sector organizations work in the area of ecology and the environment environment, promoting conservation, sustainability, and environmental education. Among the main environmental and ecological societies of Belo Horizonte, are the AMDA (Minas Gerais Defense Association of the Environment).

For LAYRARGUE (2019), Non-governmental organizations, such as AMDA in Minas Gerais, play a crucial role in promoting environmental education, acting as mediators between civil society, public authorities and companies, promoting sustainable practices and awareness ecological. This perspective reinforces the importance of the third sector in implementing policies environmental.

AMDA is one of the largest environmental non-governmental organizations time of operation in Minas Gerais, since 1978, the year of its foundation. Among its main activities are: environmental education; environmental monitoring and complaints; public policies for conservation; and recovery of degraded areas. It has been fundamental in defending resources water resources and in the monitoring of environmental crimes in Minas Gerais, serving as a model for other Third Sector entities for their capacity for mobilization and advocacy (Costa, 2022, p. 89).

The Guaicuy Institute is also an ecological society of waste pickers, located in Belo Horizonte. The work of this association is directed towards ecological and socio-environmental issues, in favor of collective causes. Its ecological mission is the conservation of watersheds, the management of natural resources, water resources and environmental education.

The Guaicuy Institute has a structure independent of the State and the market, with a view focused on the recovery of springs and riparian forests. Furthermore, their work is attentive to environmental public policies, assistance to traditional communities and family farmers in the search for sustainability. According to Dias (2012), these organizations improve working conditions of collectors, increase income and reduce irregular disposal.

#### 6 PUBLIC POLICIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

With the aim of improving the quality of life of the people of Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais has made several partnerships with Third Sector institutions, implementing several programs in the city. The program Vila Viva, for example, promotes various recycling projects in communities. It fosters integration of recyclable material collectors into associations that work with these materials,



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providing support for selective collection in urbanized areas.

This program also offers partnerships with cooperatives for waste management. According to Jacobi and Bensen (2020), waste picker cooperatives in cities show that recycling has a relevant social impact, helping to reduce the volume of waste in landfills and promoting inclusion of vulnerable communities, aligning sustainability and equity.

Belo Horizonte also has the Inclusive Recycling Project, financed by the Bank Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). This Project contributes to offering better conditions of work for collectors who are often in vulnerable conditions. According to Gonçalves and Teixeira (2019), the experience of Belo Horizonte shows that the organization of waste pickers in cooperatives, with government support, is an effective model for combining environmental sustainability and social justice.

The formalization of the work of collectors through associations guarantees labor rights and a better socioeconomic condition. Through the actions of this project, there is a reduction in the sending of waste to landfills as recycling volumes increase; pollution and waste raw materials decrease, improving urban sustainability. This leads to a decrease in emission of greenhouse gases, which is associated with the decomposition of waste.

According to Costa and Santos (2023), the adoption of a circular economic system requires the reduction significant reduction in the sending of waste to landfills. For this to happen, it is essential that both the private sector and the public sector direct resources towards the development of methods advanced recycling and educational campaigns that encourage the reuse of materials, thus ensuring a more sustainable production cycle.

## **7 CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES**

During the course of this work, several points that need improvement were observed.

lack of infrastructure in many cooperatives causes workers to work in poor conditions, which interfere with their quality of life and the productivity of their work.

According to Tenório (2019), financial sustainability is one of the biggest challenges faced by Third Sector organizations. The dependence on specific resources, such as donations and public notices, without building a long-term financing strategy, it puts many entities in situation of vulnerability, compromising its continuity.

The value attributed to recyclable products is also something that needs to improve, as this will improve also the economic conditions of the workers who carry out this work. According to Arantes (2015), collectors, with such a large participation in the recycling production chain, have paltry incomes that, in some cases, do not reach the minimum wage.



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The precariousness of working conditions limits the growth of these enterprises and places workers at physical risk. Physical spaces are also an aggravating factor, as they are not appropriate. Some cooperatives operate in improvised places, without adequate conditions for the work. Many workers don't even use personal protective equipment. It was also observed the lack of investment in training. According to Resende (2009), the Third Sector faces a major challenge: improving its management to enhance social results to which it is proposed.

Based on the studies analyzed, it was concluded that there is much room for improvement in this regard. of recycling work in BH, especially the conditions of the workers who carry out the work service with recyclables. In this sense, public policies are necessary; investment from the sectors private, in the modernization of associations, is essential; and above all, investment in human capital.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This work sought to show the importance of the Third Sector in the issue of work recycling in the capital of Minas Gerais. Your participation not only contributes to sustainability, of the environment, it also contributes to the social inclusion of people who are often treated as marginalized form. Through associations, cooperatives and non-governmental organizations, the Third Sector has proven to be a facilitator in the lives of many workers and their families, mainly for recyclable collectors, offering them training and inserting them in dignified way to the job market.

The contribution that these workers make to the environment is also undeniable, since that reduces negative environmental impacts. The work of the Third Sector goes far beyond collecting and processing of recyclables. These organizations promote educational work, showing the population, through attitudes, the importance of selective collection and the use, without waste, of resources environmental issues. Furthermore, many of these organizations offer their workers opportunities improvements in their financial conditions.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand that public policy intervention and partnerships are necessary. with private organizations to improve the enhancement of these Third Sector initiatives, who works, in a commendable way, contributing to the sustainability of our planet. I believe that our authorities can contribute a little more, with incentives, so that these institutions can demonstrate their potential in terms of sustainable work.



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