NEW PROJECT FUNDING FOR RECYCLERS

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In February 2007, the REDE ABC GERANDO RENDA 2 year project was funded by Programa Petrobras Fome Zero to support recyclers in the municipalities of Ribeirão Pires, Mauá, Santo André, São Bernardo e Diadema. The lead institution of the project is Instituto GEA, an organization dedicated to develop citizenship and to assist communities in developing selective garbage collection and recycling (website: http://www.institutogea.org.br/). The total funding for this project is 247,000 Reais. The new project will focus on improving the working conditions and income generation of 299 catadores and catadoras in these municipalities. The project seeks to strengthen the sustainability of the cooperatives, improve current recycling processes and create new possibilities for value-added products from the materials. These groups are part of the National Movement of Catadores/as of Recyclable Material (MNCR) and of the ABC Regional group and the Participatory Sustainable Waste Management (PSWM) project between Fundação Santo André (Brazil), and University of Victoria (Canada) financed through the Canadian International Development Agency. These groups are actively involved in gaining public policy commitment for inclusive solid waste management initiatives and in gaining support for increased infrastructure.

Private companies are also participating throughout the region, either through donations of recyclable materials, institutional support and/or in promoting environmental education. There are cases of consistent support, such as Tetra Pak, who recently donated equipment such as bags and educational material to Ribeirão Pires that is contributing to the selective waste collection program. The project was affirmed after two days of negotiation at the council of Santo André and at the University FSA, involving the catadores/as, municipal government and project members from PSWM. This was an important step towards empowerment of the recyclers, reinforcing their identity with the project.
Cooperma: Adding value to recyclables

The Recycling Cooperative, Cooperma, in Mauá, Brazil is adding value to recyclable materials. A member of the cooperative has invented a machine that transforms PET bottles into clothesline. The machine, also made from recycled materials, can transform two PET bottles into ten meters of clothesline. The initiative to add value to recycled materials is gaining attention. Cooperma is seeking support for a marketing strategy from neighboring municipalities.

Cooperma has an extensive system for the separation and sorting of recyclable material. In March, Nancy Ferlatte from AUCC and members of PSWM visited Cooperma to see the operation and the value-added products. The visit was an opportunity to learn about unique value-added products and share experiences of the project.

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Recycling glass on Mayne Island, BC.
Look out for this featured story in our next Newsletter edition.

Mayne Island artist Mark Lauckner uses recycled glass to make art.
Visit to CooperPires in Ribeirão Pires:
A meeting with Co-op members and local government agents.

Cooperpires recently received a visit from the Secretary of Economic Development in Ribeirão Pires, Marcelo Menato, to discuss the development and support of the cooperative. Some of the primary concerns at the moment are the construction of toilet facilities and the formalization of the cooperative.

The lack of toilet facilities is a major public health issue that has been neglected for a few years. Another demand of Cooperpires is to formalize the cooperative, which requires a detailed and costly formal process. Marcelo Menato has taken the lead in answering these demands and supporting the cooperative.
Door to Door Collection in Diadema:
A project to evaluate the collection services through the Vida Limpa program.

The objectives of the project are to evaluate the performance of the selective collection of household recyclable materials in Diadema operating through the Vida Limpa (Clean Life) program. The Vida Limpa program is contributing to the generation of income and improving the quality of life for informal recyclers in Diadema. Additionally, the program facilitates greater resource recovery, a cleaner urban environment, and supports solidarity economy. The program is generating increased environmental awareness in the community, and has enormous potential to be transferred to other communities of Brazil as an example of community recycling.

Participating groups of the program will act as researchers in this study and will be involved in the implementation, analysis and dissemination of the research results. This process of action research promotes learning and can be a positive transforming experience for the participants involved. The evaluation will include a survey, and in-depth interviews with members of the community, the catadores (recyclers) of the Vida Limpa program and other representatives involved with the Program. The use of photos and video will document the process of selective collection and the interviews. Additionally, updated maps of the door to door collection and control points will be produced.

University partnership for local development:
experiences, assets and barriers

On March 2nd, more than 70 people participated in a presentation and debate about the topic: University partnership for local development: experiences, assets and barriers. Participants included professors from Canada, professors from Fundação Santo André (FSA) and other universities, representatives from NGOs as well as graduate and post-graduate students from FSA. This was an excellent opportunity to hear experiences from other international projects.
The venue provided an opportunity to meet with participants from two other CIDA-funded UPCD projects in Brazil: Sister Watershed Project and Building Capacity in Food Security Project. Project leaders met to discuss the organization of a joint workshop on gender issues, to be held in São Paulo in 2008.

Comparing and Contrasting: Community Economic Development, Social Enterprise, and the Social Economy

A Presentation by Dr. Yves Vaillancourt, Victoria BC.

At a recent lecture in Victoria, B.C., sponsored by the Canadian Community Economic Development Network and the Canadian Social Economy Hub, Dr. Yves Vaillancourt highlighted the differences between Community Economic Development, Social Enterprise, and Social Economy. Dr. Yves Vaillancourt is an established political economist and professor in the School of Social Work at Université du Québec à Montréal. He has dedicated his career to social policy development in Canada by investigating the interface between social economy and the public sector. His lecture served to highlight several “souvenirs” of experience that have helped shape the face of the social economy in Canada over the past decades. Economics was long associated with capitalist viewpoints and considered contrary to the motives of the community-based sector. The neoliberal era saw the promotion of free markets and privatization of social programs, thus challenging social policy development in Canada. Governments disabled many social programs that provided social services such as home-care, health and safety, and opted for privatization. Canada experienced this “crisis of the welfare state” in the late 1970s, as did many developed nations in Europe.

Dr. Vaillancourt and other researchers obliged to face the crisis from a theoretical standpoint. In the 1980s, they began highlighting the distinction between privatization of a commercial type and privatization of services in the community sector where responsibility was transferred from state to the market sector. The third sector or voluntary sector began filling the gap where provision of social services was lacking. The third sector was largely known for providing assistance “from welfare to work” at this time.
In Canada, the concept of economics has only recently become associated with social work. It is more common for community-based organizations to implement economic development projects. Dr. Vaillancourt noted a milestone in the evolution of civil society when, in Quebec, Community Economic Development (CED) initiatives began delivering social services. However, the late 1990s in British Columbia saw a strong objection to third sector alliances with the public sector. It was seen as a form of downsizing and a privatization strategy to kill the state. At this time, CED was a purely Quebec experience. Only recently has the concept gained support in British Columbia and in other provinces across Canada. CED remains a North American experience of social economy. CED in Canada has a 40 year history. The term encompasses community-based projects at the interface between market sector and social service delivery. It is comprised of inter-sectoral management with community-based autonomy. The CED vision links community and economic spheres by supporting entrepreneurial pursuits that contribute to community gains. Thus the focus is not on economic growth, but on community development.

Social Economy has a history spanning 150 years in Europe and Latin America. The concept includes initiatives for the development of civil society, but is not limited to market enterprise. In France, Solidarity Economy is distinct from Social Economy as the unifying aspect of the theory is stressed. While CED comprises similar values, the term Social Economy is contested in Canadian politics. The question arises whether Canadian practitioners should change their terminology according to government preferences? While it is advisable to acknowledge public sensitivity to the concept, Dr. Vaillancourt advises it should not be at the expense of Social Economy values.

Social Enterprise remains largely a European concept although the idea is growing in BC. There are varying definitions, but it is largely seen as business with social and/or environmental objectives, ethical values, and autonomous community ownership. The social values of Social Enterprise often overlap with those of Cooperatives, Social Economy and Participatory projects, although Social Enterprise retains a more narrow focus. In Europe, strict distinctions are made between Social and Solidarity Economy, Social Enterprise, and CED while, in Canada, the debate has been much less explicit. Regardless, the general notion that the economy cannot be seen as separate from society is gaining momentum. A shift in focus from economic growth to developing healthy communities is evident in Europe, Latin America and Canada. Dr. Vaillancourt stresses the value of a historical approach to theoretical definitions so that younger generations can learn from past experiences.

Photo: http://www.socialeconomynetwork.ca/hub/?p=287

Links: http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca/
Stories from Canada

Homeless Needs Survey in Victoria

The Homeless Needs Survey, an initiative of the Cool Aid Society (www.coolaid.org) was held February 5-9 2007 and has identified 1,115 persons in the Capital Region who are homeless or unstably housed. The survey was conducted throughout the Capital Region District with questionnaires about housing needs completed by persons who were homeless or living in unstable housing.

The Homeless Needs Survey will provide detailed and helpful information to over 60 participating service providers in the Capital Region, and will be shared with all levels of government and other community partners to help us better meet the needs of individuals and families who are inadequately housed in Greater Victoria. The HNS included binning (informal recycling) on the questionnaire as an income generating activity for individuals that are homeless. The results from this survey will provide insights into the socio-economic barriers that binners are facing, and can contribute to identifying the significance of this activity for poverty alleviation.

Cart solution in Victoria

As a response from the growing number of shopping carts left discarded by binners at the View Street bottle depot in Victoria, a hand written notice has been placed prohibiting shopping carts on the premises. The bottle depots cannot legally refuse to buy material from binners because they are using shopping carts, and are most probably under pressure from the grocery stores. "The staff there are really good to the binners" reports Tony Hoar, designer of Tony's Trailers. Tony provides binners in Victoria with carts (see photo) to collect recyclable materials, and is actively involved in promoting inclusive waste strategies.

Peter’s story

On January 25, 2007, Peter Verin was asked to move all his possessions off campus (University of Victoria) that were being stored in facilities management. Peter is a familiar face on the University campus, often seen pushing a shopping cart and salvaging materials that are discarded. If you ask around about him, you may hear things like "a burnt-out professor of the sixties" morphed into "a homeless bum living on campus." But researchers Crystal, Nandan and Emma of the Community-based Research Laboratory went beyond the rumors to seek the man who seems to be a professional salvager, who incessantly questions the system – a system that is often dehumanizing. This, according to Peter, is something we never hear about. He writes, "What's happening to me is not about me, nor even, necessarily, about these far more abused than myself..."
His struggle for identity should not be mistaken as a self-styled egocentric rebel. This conforms to what is seen in the UVSS Board Meeting minutes, "He (Peter) said that by singling him out for being different, the Board punishes every student who is anonymous". His advocacy for students stems from his recognition which he wrote in Martlet (Thursday April 7th, 2005, Volume 57, Issue 29) that, "Historically, students have been marginalized and patronized. Similarly, education has been mystified, thus alienating from the general population. Knowledge should not be a commodity...". Peter symbolizes the numerous marginalized individuals whom provide a service by salvaging discarded resources in our environment and challenges the moral codes of societies disposable culture.

**NEW FUNDING FOR URBAN BINNING UNIT**

Recently the Urban Binning Unit (UBU) initiative received funding from BC Social Venture Partners, Vancouver Foundation and Vancity (Social Enterprise Fund) to develop an additional 40 carts and to hire community developer Andy Wilkinson to advance the project in capacity building for public relations and community outreach. The UBU is a cart designed specifically for binners and is intended to replace the shopping cart as the preferred means for collecting and transporting recyclable beverage containers. Designed by industrial designer Michael Strutt in conjunction with the United We Can bottle depot in Vancouver, the UBU has contributed to legitimizing binning and improving the social networks and partnerships of binners and the community in recovering recyclable materials. This initiative, first launched in 2005, is leading inclusive community strategies for economic development, social inclusion and waste management and providing a unifying voice for binners.
The UBU offers businesses, organization and individuals a unique approach to advertising and logo placement, while visibly positioning them as supportive to community socio-economic and environmental initiatives. Some recent UBU sponsors include Small Potatoes Urban Deliver (SPUD) and Intertech Construction Group (ITC). The UBU is advancing the public’s perception of binners, and improving the livelihoods of binners by strengthening their social capital and empowering them as self-motivating entrepreneurs.

We are pleased to announce our next PSWM Newsletter edition will be in English and Portuguese.

New PSWM Project Brochure and Micro-credit Folder now available on the PSWM website at www.geog.uvic.ca/pswm