

WASTE AND PUBLIC POLICY PROBLEMS FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT – MICRO-LEVEL INSIGHTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Prof R. Radhakrishna's Project of Development

Over a span of decades, Prof R. Radhakrishna¹ has researched the Indian economy as a differentiated social phenomenon in which poverty and vulnerability persist. He has shown how excessive inequality threatens political stability, social cohesion and welfare. He has marshalled statistical evidence to argue that growth needs distribution and social provisioning. For Prof Radhakrishna, social policy is economic policy for labour, and also a response to the threats stemming from inequality. Just as they are part of social transformation, social policy and provisioning must also be part of state-building.

In this contribution to the celebration of this consistent approach to development, I wish to offer some insights about the economy as a waste-producing system and about the policy field of waste and state-building around waste, which I hope may be relevant to other sectors and policy fields.

Why? For several reasons connected with Prof RR's work. Waste is a marginalised aspect of economic development.² It is one of the less noticed but necessary infrastructural conditions for sustainable growth. Waste is also under-reported. Despite public familiarity with waste, public knowledge about it is dysfunctionally incomplete. Waste therefore exemplifies Prof RR's arguments for the need for a broadly conceived project of public education. Waste turns attention towards labour, the most neglected of

¹ Henceforth RR

² Isher Ahluwalia is rare as an economist to champion the importance of waste and its management.
http://icrier.org/pdf/Working_Paper_356.pdf

macro-economic variables. It is also a territory for essential reforms needed for equitable development in India's vast informal economy. It addresses the paradox of state action outside the limits of its regulative reach.

Policy must be rescued from its status as an 'implication' in development economics. With a pluralist conception of policy, Prof RR has simulated policy alternatives, mindful of their costs, and has rigorously analysed their effects. This is consistent with the approach to 'policy as process' in development studies in which policy is one of the encounters between the state as the source of authoritative ideas, of public funds, administrative capacities and procedures on the one hand and the varied social processes of ground reality and access on the other.³

Confronted with the necessity and the ubiquity of waste and the multidimensional poverty of most of its work-force, and in the spirit of trans-disciplinary holism, we also need to associate economic policy for waste with social policies for the poverty of humiliated castes.

In mainstream economics, extrapolation from case material is not respected. But fieldwork not only compensates for statistics, it is another way of knowing, regarded as legitimate in the pluralist thematic discipline of development studies. Here, given the absence of quantitative evidence, or reliable macro-level statistics – especially about the informal economy of waste - there is no alternative to the case study from field-work.⁴ The sub-field of research on waste is replete with case studies. That of a small town developed here illuminates processes and complements the bulk of case studies which are sited in cities.

The rest of this paper develops the question 'What is to be done about waste?' by examining the prior question 'What needs knowing about what is being done about waste?'

2. THE CONSTITUTIVE CONTEXT OF WASTE FOR POLICY

Actually existing policy ('what is actually being done') is set not in silos but in specific contexts. Field research on policy processes reviewed by Fernandez (2012) shows how all state policies – called 'technologies of rule' - are embedded in and construed through specific contexts. Research on these contexts shows that the preconditions for the possibility of policy are rarely considered, the analytical boundaries of the contexts of policy are not secure, and the portrayal of these contexts varies considerably according to

³ Schaffer 1984

⁴ Flyvbjerg 2006

theoretical perspectives (from the genealogies and discourses of national plans to political economies at multiple scales and sites). While acknowledging the importance of other approaches to constitutive contexts, that used here will be start by being restricted to the peculiar physical and social characteristics of waste itself – its ‘quiddity’. In examining policy processes on the ground constitutive contexts that cannot be identified in advance are uncovered. What we add to the debates about how to contextualise policy is that it may well require iterative research.

The Quiddity of Waste. First, the very definition of waste in economy is unstable: Mary Douglas’ ‘matter out of place’ has limited traction when waste occupies all unbuilt urban territory no matter its tenurial status. Waste as substance with no value confronts its negative value, its costs of disposal, its pollution and its costs to public health. Yet waste as a public bad confronts its role as a public good providing raw material for recycling (and livelihoods under jobless growth and persistent ascribed caste stigma). Waste policy has itself been conceived as a public good to remedy public bads or to purify impure public goods (Cave 2014). The idiosyncratic lack of social consensus about definitions and concepts of waste defines it as a sub-field for research and action. Yet waste is also socially constructed as invisible (Rodriguez 2009). For the generators of waste, waste is ‘othered’ and made socially invisible, spaces of waste are other territories for socially ‘othered’ people to manage. With invisibility of things and the workforce managing waste goes ignorance about quantities, composition and destinations of waste. In our case study town, official reckonings of waste varied by a factor of 3; and for one municipal sanitation worker we estimate between 10-15 unregistered workers in the huge informal waste economy.

It is thought however that waste is the fastest growing sector of the Indian economy, with peak waste (when material efficiencies will outweigh waste-generation due to growth) estimated as occurring a century hence (Hoornweg et al, 2013). Although national estimates vary wildly, India is thought currently to generate in the region of 960m tonnes per year, a third each from agriculture, industry, and consumption (CEE, 2014)⁵.

While small-town waste is a highly differentiated sector (see the business models in appendix 1) at the apex of which are private firms that are in local terms large in turnover and workforces, the urban social structure generating waste is experienced by the bulk of the informal workforce as one of Galtung’s ‘structures of violence’ (1969). Waste is an economic and social trap for SCs and STs – the waste economy is fractured territory for mobilisation due to social sub-divisions which even cast one tribal group as

⁵ Centre for Environmental Education (CEE) 2014, *Sourcebook on solid and liquid waste management in rural India*, Centre for Environmental Education, New Delhi

not fully human.⁶ Urban waste-scapes are toxic environments, transgressing constitutional protections. Despite the slow and uneven low-caste cosmopolitanisation of the municipal waste workforce and despite the tendency to attribute acts of discrimination to lack of acquired individual attributes, it remains suffused with ascribed stigma.⁷

The informal workforce lacks access to public goods and services, and is at the early stages of securing citizenship rights. Whether or not waste workers are uniquely vulnerable and/or disproportionately socially excluded awaits further research. For the informal waste workforce, the state is constituted through a complex tangle of contradictory processes and institutions. On the one hand it provides elite jobs in waste (though these jobs are subject to casualization and contractualisation); it provides reserved jobs (though no longer inheritable) reserved places in education (but enabling certificates are regularly withheld). Municipal sanitation labour now has bank accounts (though they face regular disrespect in queues for tellers). On the other hand there is no promotion out of the lowest categories for bureaucratic jobs, no washing facilities and inadequate-to-no provision of equipment and protective uniforms. For waste-workers, state agencies are upper caste (UC); their workforces UC, their sites in town UC.

This is a very brief introduction to the context in which we discuss the Waste Question: ‘what is to be done’. The focus of this paper, policy for waste, is sectoralised and labelled in language neutral to that of this life-world of waste but it is implemented through tangled skeins of prejudice and relations of social exclusion.

To start dissecting what might be done we need to understand what is being done. For this we follow convention in studies of actually existing policy processes (Schaffer 1984, and see the review of subsequent approaches in Fernandez 2012). We consider:

first, policy in terms of discourse, ideas and terms, focussing on the impact of the labelling of policy fields;

second, the organisational and procedural architecture consequential to be labelling of non-waste fields through which bureaucrats operate;

third, the routine deformities resulting from informalisation of policy practices.

⁶ See Harriss-White and Rodrigo 2017 for the case of the Irular.

⁷ See Harriss 2017a for poverty and livelihoods; 2017b for formality and informality and Harriss-White and Rodrigo 2016 for social discrimination in this small town waste economy.

Evidence from the small town waste economy is used here to inform reflections about waste policy, policy processes in general and the intersections of policy fields. Policy must be rescued from its status as an ‘implication’ in development economics.

‘In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality’ (B. R. Ambedkar). The evidence in this exploration of public policy shows how for waste and waste work, *even in politics*, socially restricted access to public goods, to appropriate technology, and to fair and enforceable state-regulation prevents equitable development.

3. POLICY AS DISCOURSE, DECLARATION AND FIELD

India’s current goal is zero waste. ‘Zero waste must be India’s mission’ said the Union Environment Minister on World Environment Day, June 2018⁸. This term of art confounds the evidence from materials and energy sciences that zero waste is not possible. The livelihoods that would be displaced by zero waste are also unknown to the state, except for manual scavenging where the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has begun a new survey process, from January 2018, one requiring self-identification and extensive documentation (which many manual scavengers do not have).⁹ Whereas we have already seen that waste is a socially exclusionary policy field in the small town, at the national level it is utopian.

All policies are unavoidably labelled and arranged in conceptual silos (human development, social protection, social inclusion, women’s empowerment, reservations, tribal uplift etc. are all relevant to our topic). These labels need interpretation to relate them to the differentiated life-worlds of waste-workers. The social implications of actually existing policy for waste must be matched by the implications for waste of actually existing policies and public goods for social excluded groups. But to our knowledge this has never been done.

Appendix 2 uses key official texts to attempt an incomplete and simplified scoping of the two policy fields.¹⁰ Both policy fields are extremely complicated. Policy for waste involves at least 4 ministries. It is heavily

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<https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/why-india-is-taking-the-lead-for-a-clean-planet/story-F3FCtwEL9HyUmeSvqPrUpO.html>

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https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/outlawed-25-years-ago-manual-scavenging-continues-to-be-rampant-in-india-118060500185_1.html

¹⁰ This has involved discussion with, and help from, Advaita Rajendra, IIM Ahmedabad.

oriented towards technology, away from labour and does not mention the special development needs of *Dalits*, *Adivasis* and women¹¹.

Policy for Waste and its Implications for Social Policy

How is waste policy conceived labelled and classified? Insofar as it takes territorial expressions, it is a subfield of 'urban planning' which is a field considered separate from policy if only because it cannot deal spatially with questions of justice (Roy, 2009) (except to exacerbate injustice through spatial exclusion. As policy, consumption waste has been awarded a field of its own – solid waste management (SWM) (Kumar et al 2009). As a policy field SWM is ranked low, even as the 'least developed sector' (Cave 2014). SWM is compartmentalised, 'rarely mentioned' in multi-sector urban planning and policy documents and suffers from lack of finance, manpower and equipment.¹²

This type of waste policy has also been developed and politicised unsystematically and selectively in ways which privilege waste disposal over re-use and recycling and large scale technologies and corporate forms of business organisation over the generally smaller scales of firms officially operating in urban waste economies let alone in the informal economy.¹³ It generally ignores the informal waste economy that the state relies on and that SWM would threaten to destroy if it were implemented as planned.

Its implications for social inclusion are ignored but would be very positive if policy preconditions and policy opposition could be negotiated, if labour displacement, retraining and re-employment were internalised, if targets could be covered and policy implemented as conceived.

Policy for social inclusion and implications for the waste economy.

Policies for social inclusion involving the public goods of health, education, nutrition, sanitation, housing, labour and preschool health are textbook examples for the definition of public goods not as non rivalrous or non excludable but as the result of political decisions that they should be publicly provided. While certain policies are targeted at some of India's classically disenfranchised and excluded groups, others (like education) are untargeted and, as seen here, vulnerable to capture. Social policy specifically for SCs and STs involve 2 Ministries.

Yet, a set of political institutions and practices impose social exclusion and social expulsion in spite of laws and political movements and demands to

¹¹ And let us not forget Muslims

¹² Cave 2014, 2017; WIEGO 2017, Balarman 2015.

¹³ Cave 2017, Demaria and Schindler 2015, Dias and Samson 2016, Kumar et al 2009, Srinivasan 2006

the contrary. Earmarked but underfunded schemes face a structure of indifference and evasion; the preconditions of effectiveness are missing or sabotaged (Fernandez 2012). Although positive discrimination in education and state employment allows for the economic and political participation of *Dalits* and *Adivasis*, their under-representation anywhere but at the foot of the status/skill ladder ensures ‘that emerging voices do not translate into successful and effective social and economic engagement; and that striving for representation does not transform itself into practical control over productive socio-political and economic resources’.¹⁴

Then, a vast diversity of capillary powers, institutions and practices, ranging from endogamy to patronage, from land and forest alienation to eviction, and from discriminatory terms of exchange to atrocities, are deployed in order to ensure that the removal of social disadvantage and low esteem remains a battle to be won (Harriss-White et al 2014). In what Satish Saberwal (1996) has called its ‘micro-cellular’ organization, civil society permeates the state to strengthen rather than dissolve the distinctions of religion and caste—or it has both dissolved and strengthened them simultaneously.

The implication for waste of most social policy is that waste will increase. Waste has not been mainstreamed in social policy.

Policy Intersectionality.

We see that waste policy and social policy each involve several ministries and yet in these cases they are discrete sets which do not overlap with the possible exception of Urban Development, lately tasked with removing in equality.

Yet policy fields both organised in silos and distributed across separate ministries interact and have consequences. The rehabilitation component of Swachh Bharat, is one component of a set of the relations described in this paper which form a *structure of discrimination*, not just in the state but in markets and civil society (Prakash, 2015). The two fields intersect for the state’s response to human waste and the rehabilitation of toilet cleaners. The neglect of cleaning the new toilets installed under Swachh Bharat has been noticed by the leading movement for the eradication of manual scavenging (SKA).

Policy intersections for social exclusion and the waste economy form part of this structure of discrimination but to date this intersection appears to be an under-researched project. Just as the state needs the informal economy of waste, it may need the exclusion of its waste-workers.

¹⁴ See Prakash and Harriss-White, 2010 for *Dalits* and *Adivasis* and Khalidi 2008, for Muslims.

4. THE WASTE POLICY BUREAUCRACY

Waste research at present contributes little material to ‘theorise the actual practice of planning’ and policy (Sundaresan, 2017). A focus on the way waste is organised in municipal government can identify those institutions which shape policy practices.¹⁵

Local government in small towns is formally responsible for stocks and flows of waste ¹⁶ but public ownership is commonly confined to the dump-yard and its inadequate transport fleet and the small proportion of the labour force employed by the municipality. Informal waste-work is de facto out of its control.

Small Town Bureaucratic Architecture

The town we studied is small, low status and revenue-poor. Its local government bureaucracy is understaffed, suffering high turnover, doubling of duties, and poor motivation (evinced by short working hours, frequent absence and final-posting inertia).

Waste is a low priority sector in complex bureaucratic job specifications held generally by engineers. Administrative boundaries do not accord with the town’s spatial spread. Responsibility for networked infrastructure varies in its coverage of waste and new investments (needed to potentiate sewage treatment for instance) involve complex property rights in a range of jurisdictions. Budgets for capital costs for such infrastructure must be obtained from the state government and at its discretion. Meetings are often out-of-town at district or state capitals unfamiliar with the town. Multiple routes exist to block activity or shift responsibility.

Officials responsible for waste, mostly engineers by training, have no consensus about the definition and content of the town’s waste and provide a wide range of estimates of its volume. Responsibility for waste is fragmented across departments and field stations of the state/central government, making for bureaucratic silos and obstacles to communication. Bureaucratic ignorance is exacerbated by privatisation/contractualisation which has resulted in delayed financial flows, lack of co-ordination between private and public spheres and mutual suspicion.

As a result, ‘we (the municipal engineers) have no control over waste’. Responsibility is abandoned.

¹⁵ The analytical status of the policy bureaucracy is ambiguous for it may also be seen as part of the immediate constitutive context, and as the consequences of labelling non waste fields.

¹⁶ Demaria and Schindler 2015

The ‘unskilled’ sanitation work-force, the ‘waste-labour aristocracy’, is seldom mentioned and then as a management problem rather than a resource (‘robotise their work’) – let alone a human resource with social disadvantages, let alone a resource to be consulted.

The fire wall between policy discourse and statements on the one hand and actually existing law and policy practice needs breaking down.

5. THE INFORMALISATION OF POLICY PRACTICES

Without examining the intersection of policy with the actually existing state and its practices we will not understand the interests opposing decent waste and social inclusion policies and cannot answer whether policies and laws for both waste and social inclusion need to destroy such interests, can by-pass them or have to pay them off and, if so, then how.

The state acts informally whenever it contravenes or fails to enforce its own regulations. This may happen wherever non-state social forces penetrate the state and make it cede its power. Its scope to regulate society is then constrained, and forms of social authority seep complicitously into its bureaucratic nooks and crannies.

The proliferation of concepts for informal practices.

Inadequately reduced to ‘corruption’ and ‘rent-seeking’, the range of practices, exchanges and transactions recorded in the research literature on informality in policy-making and implementation invokes distinctive modes of policy practice.¹⁷ These cannot be assumed away or ignored not the least because it is well-established that they have the potential to turn beneficiaries into victims (Fernandez, 2012).

Just as informality long preceded its labelling, so through informal practices the de-regulated state long preceded its formal identification as such. And just as waste and waste-workers are both subject to many terms and meanings so the conceptualisation of the informalised state has proliferated: as its own ‘shadow’, as ‘parallel’ and ‘meshed’, as ‘ambiguous’, and a ‘cascading structure of power’, as ‘legally pluralist’, subject to ‘geobribes’ and ‘jugaad’, as a shifting and dynamic process and a manifestation of ‘vernacular governance’.¹⁸ Such a state is an ensemble of ‘policies, laws and acts, processes and protocols, institutions, social, political and governmental actors and planning history’ (Sundaresan, 2017, p21). Prakash (2017) finds that the state, while an arena for the new public

¹⁷ Rajagopal, 2015, Roy 2009, van Dijk, 2017

¹⁸ Roy, 2009, 2012; de Bercegol et al 2017, Prakash 2017; Sundaresan 2017, Van Dijk and Bhide 2016

management under which it openly regulates to serve the interests of capital, is also penetrated by allegiances owing their legitimacy to party politics, caste, religion and ethnicity. So he sees the state as informally 'hybridised' and both a giver and a seeker of rents.

As is abundantly the case for waste and for waste-workers, the conditions of unregulated, informal practices in the state are the object of a proliferation of terms. Words matter. It has to be queried whether the dynamic state of competition over neologisms reflects the exploration of *terra nova* or whether the originators of the new competing concepts and terms do not wish to communicate across their fields.

Class logic of the informalised state.

Yet the very informal practices that make the state's transactions possible also constrain and even 'paralyse' its capacity to make and implement any development policy which has to cut across such allegiances (Roy 2009).

Far from chaotic, for Roy the informalised state has a class logic in which violations of formal laws by 'elites' are either ignored or legitimised by amnesties. She calls this process 'un-mapping'. This involves the re-notification and reallocation of land use categories, including spaces for waste, for the purposes of privatisation, beautification and the capture of rents.

By contrast violations of laws in 'slums' threaten the legal sanctity of property and bourgeois aesthetics, and head for punishment: the destruction of property and the expulsion of 'waste people'.¹⁹

The small town case

In the small town we have researched, the presence of much physical disorder and fractured bureaucratic architecture shapes the informalisation not only of the waste economy but also of waste policy practices.

Revenue and expenditure create informal waste-work. It is not just that the official budget for waste management, squeezed by tax evasion so that revenue rises far more slowly than do volumes of waste - and capped at 49%, requires an informal waste economy at no direct cost to the state. It is that formal bureaucratic responsibilities also create incentives for informal livelihoods in and outside the state. When vigilance forces are severely understaffed or have no transport as in the Pollution Control Board then regulative law cannot be enforced, supervision is ineffective and other forms

¹⁹ Chaturvedi and Gidwani, 2010, Doron 2016, Gill 2010, McFarlane 2008, Reddy 2013, Suryaprakash 2014. The process of political negotiation over (valuable) space for processing (temporarily or permanently valueless) waste by displaced waste-workers has been called 're-placement' by Whitson 2011, recalling Douglas, 1966.

of political and social authority keep order. When activity is uncoordinated, then informal gatekeepers enter to inform, mediate and allocate resources. When whistle blowing is known to be heavily penalised, rent creation and sharing is rife. Budgets for equipment and machinery can be top-sliced, and the quality of equipment, the efficiency of its use declines, and its hazards increase.

The pervasive nature of informalised bureaucratic practices²⁰ and the absence of a coherent waste policy have allowed the following practices for waste to emerge:

- i) the part-privatisation of the workforce (common to all public institutions)
- ii) plans for re-locating dumps (stalled),
- iii) new crematorium and slaughter house (rarely used)
- iv) plans for vermi-composting (at 'power-point' stage but unfunded)

This may appear an arbitrary set of bureaucratic practices but it indicates the importance of the constitutive context for lack of policy or for non-policy: the lack of conditions of possibility of policy, involving i) neoliberal ideology operating at a high level above that of the municipality on which it is imposed; ii) criminally stressed revenue streams for public finance and a culture of non-compliance; iii) a countervailing politics of resistance to urban waste by local rural panchayats; and iv) powerful social preferences for technologies and practices of human death and animal killing outside the municipality's control.

'What is to be done?' cannot currently be developed without factoring in these contextual conditions. Policy has to be consistent with them or such conditions have to be changed. Either way this case study indicates that the challenge posed by context to the formulation of policy is a general one.

6. WHAT IS BEING DONE: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN SMALL-TOWN WASTE

In the absence of a locally competent socially-inclusive state, informal waste workers are not incapable of political mobilisation in response to - and in hostility to - the informalised state which largely reinforces their social exclusion. They are found capable of organising independently of non-local NGOs.

Political Mobilisation: Exemplary Cases

²⁰ See Roy 2009, Doron 2016 on rule by aesthetics

The growing literature on achievements in the informal economy of waste points to the importance of collective responses to triggering events: such as collective strikes and strategic public sleep-ins by waste-workers to secure insurance payments for the families of workers asphyxiated in sewers or killed during roadside work or cross-class protests at pollution and loss of livelihoods from waste incinerators, or from landfill.²¹ Given the existence of exemplary cases it is easy to overlook the different politics of waste and caste elsewhere – as in the small town we studied.

Small-town self-organisation – social change and social action

Social change and social solvents To break down the persistent caste impregnation that is reinforced by waste-work, not only do work conditions need technological and social transformation, but the social cosmopolitanisation of waste-work also needs exit from waste to be possible for *Dalits* and *Adivasis* who are at present trapped and immobilised there. Gorringer (2010) has suggested social solvents in the form of caste-neutral ‘modern’ jobs, education and migration. The escape from village culture to towns brings the potential and promise of anonymity and freedom from disgracing stigma and/or the possibility to reinvent origin myths. Uniforms in sectors like waste-work are felt to level status upwards.

MSWs agreed about the potential of migration though outcomes may deviate from aspirations. They added ‘self-employment’ which they felt expressed a much desired independence. ‘In this town *Dalits* have set up in auto-rickshaws, lorries, sand, vehicles maintenance and sales, chauffeuring, tourism, construction, beef and mutton’ (said a *Dalit* social worker) plus fast-food, liquor and septic-tankering which he forgot to mention. But these opportunities, empowering some *Dalits*, do not extend to *Dalits as waste-workers* and do not stand interpretation as resistance to the oppressive conditions of waste.

Political resistance. Stigma and social exclusion are also addressed piecemeal through political activism – through existing trades unions, political parties and social movements.

The trade union that has organised waste-workers, CITU, deals with discrimination through redefining it as class oppression, and not as casteist stigma or as oppressive responses to individuals. It has mobilised targeted campaigns (eg about appropriate responses to humiliating modes of gifting food and used-clothing; for the end to harassment and dignified treatment by officials and police, of resistance to the illegal overburdening of work-loads of MSWs). In a unique case the union secured survivor

²¹ Demaria and Schindler 2015; de Bercegol and Gowda, 2016; Jagtap, nd.

compensation by the municipality for an un-unionised, informal contract waste-worker killed by a waste-lorry.

Respect and dignified treatment at work is a necessary but insufficient condition for social inclusion. And the union is constrained both by threats from the rampant privatisation of public services and by the state's evident inability to regulate waste.

While *Dalits* join all mainstream parties, it is the Dalit Panther party that is devoted to solving caste tensions within and between *Dalits*, mainly outside work. Inter-caste marriages and drunken brawls are constant challenges -as is the mediation of episodes of discrimination in schools and colleges; crimes against *Dalit* property; and police beatings. 'Because the police is so biased against us we have to take law into own hands' said a *Dalit* Panther.

Dalit social movements such as Ambedkar Pasarai, are most active against caste violence. *Dalit* legal activism itself faces harassment from upper caste lawyers.

Caste associations focus on remedying poor access to public goods, protecting cross-caste marriages and property rights (though the poorest do not have property). The poorest tribal waste-workers act through kin and clan: negotiating work (routes and times of day, sharing the take, respecting the stowed waste-property of others etc.). They cannot access ST certificates and knew nothing of their tribe's political mobilisations nearby against police scapegoating and for women's empowerment.²²

Political empowerment for workers in the informal economy results from and reinforces a wider politics of social identity. It is not a direct response to the specific problems of waste and waste-work.

'Success' as a set of processes.

Achievements in the conditions of life of waste-workers are extra-ordinary. They often depend on the leadership of charismatic individuals²³ and are hard to replicate.

Success is a problematical concept in a society riven by status hierarchy where processes of social exclusion are hard-wired persistently into the social fabric and where there is no political community. In the absence of revolutionary change, improvements in waste-workers access to public goods can only mean specific and piecemeal movement toward specific and piecemeal gains of the sort described here.

²² <http://peoplesrights.in/english/?p=335>

²³ References for Pune case and SKA Bezwada Wilson

The intersection of waste and social exclusion is poorly developed as a policy field. Policy fields themselves face their own contradiction not just with the informal economy but with the pervasive informal practices of the state. While the physical environment and the demanding and demeaning work conditions of waste exclude all but those with no alternative, projects for their social inclusion face severe obstacles in the creation of waste (rather than other aspects of identity) as a terrain of political struggle. Hence the attraction of rights based in citizenship rather than mobilisations through work or even identity. For caste cannot be annihilated through the annihilation of caste-ism in waste-work. It needs the annihilation of caste among waste-generators. It needs the annihilation of their indifference to waste.

7. CONCLUSIONS : THE RISE AND RISE OF WASTE

Waste is part of the ecological crisis, a serious development problem, one not governed by the state. Waste is a sector and site of processes of social exclusion. We have examined these processes through the case of a small town, through its informal economy and the informalised practices of its local state - spliced with some of the relevant pan-Indian literature on waste and on policy.

This framing improves the understanding of the physical and cultural meanings of a sector, in this case waste. It demonstrates the effects of processes of social exclusion that have been separated analytically and for policy purposes but which are not separated in lived experience. A non-metropolitan town is the relevant unit for pan-Indian local government and front-line out-stations of the state and central governments, where intersections of policy fields might become realised.

In this town, waste is a site of many processes of exclusion.

Physical exclusion. Natural resources are public goods under rapid privatisation and degradation. Unbuilt-on land, minerals, soils, biomass, temperature, wind, rain and water have long been socially constructed. So too have society's waste-scapes which have developed as public bads. Sites of stench, dirt, pollution of both kinds (physical and ritual) and of oppressive work, unregistered or avoided by the rest of society, their harshness strikes waste-workers, just as it strikes post-modern environmentalists, as nature's own - not-conscious - agency (Barua 2014).

Exclusion by and from the State. The state reinforces the toxicity of the environment through its failure to regulate work conditions and the punitive enforcement practices it selectively metes out to waste-labour outside work.

These reduce workers' capabilities to protect themselves against danger, thereby reinforcing their social disadvantage and exclusion. With the formal power to improve, compensate and rehabilitate livelihoods in waste, the local state does the opposite: passively through ensuring incomplete information and actively through practices which deny access to public goods and attack and destroy livelihoods. Waste-workers fear regulation by this state.

The state needs waste-workers in economically and socially disadvantaged niches in the informal waste economy. In turn it is pervaded by irregular, informal practices: the informalised state is not sovereign, not separate from society, but an extension of it.²⁴

Work related exclusion. Just as the actually existing state and society are intertwined, production and waste are inseparable; so are the formal and informal economies. Informal work is indispensable, expanding, finely socially segmented and organised and integrated into the contracting formal public economy of waste. This waste-work-force, so inadequately stylised as 'waste-pickers' or 'scavengers' is socially differentiated and economically segmented.

Oppressive, dangerous environments, exclusion, discrimination, disrespect and poverty are felt to overlap in the life-worlds of most waste-workers. Work conditions involving long and rugged shifts can and do exclude waste-workers from family life and leisure; some parents (are even forced to) exclude their children from the escape-hatch of school.

While unionised labour is sensitised to cross-gender pride and solidarity in their work, this does not extend to informal workers and even unionised workers simultaneously feel disgust: some waste-workers are capable of deliberately excluding and isolating others in and out of work. The latter, migrants, tribals, experience 'social expulsion' - even when the police have to tolerate their 'temporary-permanent' camps, knowing their work is essential. *Work status determines citizenship status and entitlements.*

Civil and uncivil society. Waste workers have mobilised themselves in exceptional cases. In the absence of a social developmental state, local social movements tend to use identity (caste more so than gender) around which to mobilise rather than to address the specific conditions of waste.

While not exceptionalising India, it is a nation where many of the most excluded people working in waste are most essential to social reproduction. Her future development needs to prove this wrong.

Real policy for the real state

²⁴ As in the general statement by Jean and John Comaroff, 2016

To make recommendations for policy one has to understand the state. This is what we have attempted to do in this paper. Policies are arranged in labelled fields but policy fields intersect and all policies are implemented through the tangled relations of informality described here. Even though there is no coherent policy for waste, bureaucratic practice cannot ignore it.

Constitutive Contexts for Policy.

While there is a consensus in policy studies that context is important for all aspects of practice, there is no consensus about how context should be studied. In this research paper we started with the physical and social attributes of waste and its workforce in a small town. But in the course of discussing discourse and field, policy bureaucracies and the architecture within which they work, and the informalisation of policy practices, we found that two aspects of society, each far removed conceptually and in terms of policy fields, from each other and from the field of waste affect waste policy. These provide to be tax evasion (underfunding the town's revenue and imposed informality on waste disposal) and caste (as stigmatised occupational segregation and as a totalising social attitude too waste in the public sphere). We may have missed others. There is no hard and fast method (yet) of ensuring comprehensivity.

Preconditions and opposition. The case of a non-metropolitan town shows how policies will not work as intended unless institutional preconditions are in place and opposition neutralised. These institutions will also be part of the constitutive context. Instead of invoking 'political will', preconditions and opposition need identifying. Inevitably this requires an engagement with other labelled policy fields.

To take an example of the need to anticipate opposition, the implementation of Swachh Bharat has been found to face poor quality law (restrictive definitions of eligibility, the absence of legally stipulated enabling conditions (e.g. water availability) and local discretion over exemptions). Male biases pervaded Implementation (e.g. rehab) (IXR 2016 p307). Fixing poor quality law and male bias are examples of policy preconditions, themselves requiring policies.

It found budgetary exclusions but it also found under-investment despite budgetary allocations, the diversion of loans to the ineligible, enforcement sloth, and evasive failures in policy implementation including failure to monitor and evaluate, and lack of punishment for violations of law (IXR 2016 p 299). These are established features of disciplinary/protective policy in India. They are forces which oppose policy as intended and need fixing.²⁵

²⁵ See Chhibber 2003; Fernandez 2012.

The state is also blind to many forms of social authority that have to be negotiated in practice. At best, they are special policy fields (e.g. SGSY, ICDS). In the case of Swachh Bharat, no policy attention is paid to caste. 'Rehab' then simply reinforces caste divisions.

Policy analysis, advocacy and recommendations need preconditions and opposition to be mainstreamed.

Policy intersectionality. We have seen that waste and social inclusion are two substantially separate policy fields, while actual relations of work, discrimination and mobilisation are not bound by the classifications of the state. A new dimension of policy analysis needs developing which seeks to understand the intersections of policy discourse and actually existing policy practice for intersecting policies – in the case considered here, for work, environment, waste, identity and welfare/inclusion.

Waste generators. Waste is a sector overdetermined for low castes. Policy is directed at technologizing work assumed to be socially reserved for *Dalits*. But as Rodrigues observes (2009, p119), the management of waste is not simply a caste and cultural problem, it is a material and human problem. As a material problem it requires socially relevant technological innovation systems. As a human problem, it requires deep changes in attitudes and practices of waste-generators. It is their social and cultural problem. Waste policy does not address this. Socialisation and schooling is perhaps one site to start the development of a different social consciousness about waste and about caste.