The Emergence of “Solidarity Recycling” in Brazil: Structural Convergences and Strategic Actions in Interconnected Fields

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Abstract
The relatively good recycling performance in Brazil is associated to material recovery chains involving a huge number of informal waste collectors. Over the past decades, social activists have supported grassroots recycling cooperatives and these organizations have spread around the country becoming consecrated in the National solid waste policy as a legitimate form to organize recycling. This article analyses the emergence of “solidarity recycling” in Brazil, addressing the cultural and political relations and processes that have led to its legitimation. Cross-fertilizing Bourdieu’s sociological approach and the strategic action fields perspective, a qualitative, retrospective, and longitudinal study was conducted using secondary and primary data from various sources. Evidence shows that the emergence of solidarity recycling has resulted from both structural convergences and strategic actions unfolding across multiple fields, indicating the complementarity of the used approaches and the importance of accounting for the interconnection of arenas.

Keywords
inequality, multiple fields, emergence, culture, power, recycling, cooperatives

Introduction
In Brazil, as in other developing countries, the organization of what is today known as “reverse logistics” has historically involved a great number of unprivileged workers engaged in commercializing materials collected from streets and dumps. As a result, despite the lack of structured and effective public policies, the country appears as a top recycler of various materials (Loughlin & Barlaz, 2006). This is because stark social inequalities enhance the organization of recycling chains supplying specific industries (Wilson, Velis, & Cheeseman, 2006).

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Since the 1980s, changes in the dominant interpretations concerning work done by informal waste collectors have been mobilizing social activists to improve their livelihoods and the environmental benefits of their activity. These activists commonly promoted the organization of self-managed grassroots cooperatives and associations by these workers. Within the past decades, what we call “solidarity recycling” organizations have spread rapidly all over Brazil, ranging from a few organizations in the mid-1980s to more than 900 in 2010 (Secretaria Nacional de Economia Solidária/National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy [SENAES], 2007, 2012; Compromisso Empresarial para a Reciclagem/Business Comittment to Recycling [CEMPRE], 2015). They have also been gradually incorporated into official municipal recycling programs, becoming recognized in the National solid waste policy approved in 2010 as a legitimate solution to organize recycling. As a result, recycling in the country has become broadly associated with the “social inclusion” of recyclable waste collectors.

The purpose of this article is to assess the emergence of solidarity recycling in Brazil addressing the cultural and political relations and processes that lead to its genesis, diffusion, and consecration. Therefore, we want to understand how it came to be that such heterodox form of organizing recycling became legitimated and spread all over the country. To do this, we combined Bourdieu’s sociological approach (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) with the strategic action fields (SAF) perspective (Fligstein, 2002; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

Theoretically, the article emphasizes how these sociological approaches may be cross-fertilized to understand emergence processes unfolding across interconnected fields. Exploring deep-seated and unclarified conceptual affinities, we claim that these approaches are compatible and together they yield an understanding that is more fertile than either of the perspectives considered separately. The affinities and differences of these approaches have been the object of conceptual debate (Candido, Côrtes, Truzzi, & Sacomano Neto, 2017; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Swartz, 2014), but few empirical studies have explored how they can be complementary.

Our contribution specifically addresses the issue of the interconnection of fields, suggested by Fligstein and McAdam (2012) as an important and underexplored one. We show that despite the challenges involved in constructing research objects as an ensemble of fields, this may contribute to more accurate accounts of organizational and economic dynamics. In our case, both structural convergences, as well as situated strategic processes cross-cutting multiple interconnected fields played critical roles in the emergence of solidarity recycling, demonstrating how both Bourdieu’s structural constructivism and the more agentic and micro approach of Fligstein and McAdam (2012) are important in terms of addressing the dynamic of stability and change.

Empirically, while many academics have studied the involvement of cooperatives and associations in recycling in Brazil, no study has attempted to construct a comprehensive and historical assessment of the dynamic that leads to its legitimation. Actually, a number of them considers the emergence of these practices as automatic responses to unemployment. Most are aimed at promoting this recycling model, having a normative orientation (Coelho, Castro, & Gobbo, 2011; Gutberlet, 2015; Oliveira & Rosa, 2003; Tirado-Soto & Zamberlan, 2013). Another part of this literature is more analytical, whereby two major types of research can be identified. The first consists of very situated ethnographical case studies (Carmo & de Oliveira, 2010; Millar, 2008; Nunn & Gutberlet, 2013; Tremblay & Gutberlet, 2010). Others, based mainly on Marxist approaches, engage in broader power assessments indicating how waste collectors are integrated into capital accumulation processes (Bosi, 2008; Leal, Júnior, Alves, Gonçalves, & Dibiezo, 2002). Our account combines cultural and political elements, drawing selectively on previous analytical findings to forge a distinct assessment of the emergence of solidarity recycling. While our own normative pretentions are left aside, we consider that part of the normative literature was actually able to influence practices, considering it as a specific object of our analysis.
Theoretical Approach: Emergence and Interconnection of Fields

The sociological approach of Bourdieu and the SAF perspective provide comprehensive views of the social dynamics that are useful to make sense of the emergence and legitimation of heterodox practices entailing solidarity recycling, historicizing them, and avoiding their existence to be taken for granted. These influential approaches of contemporary economic and organizational sociologies also have concepts that are sufficiently general and flexible to operate as a research program and enable the accumulation of knowledge in social sciences (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Our strategy is cross-fertilizing them while assessing our empirical case to make a consistent and enduring contribution to our understanding of the emergence of fields.

In these perspectives, fields are relatively autonomous instances of differentiated or modern societies and involve actors occupying different positions that behave vis-a-vis one another according to power relations which shape meaning creation. They involve specific understandings about the reasons to engage in the field, the legitimate resources valid in the competition, the existing relations of power among actors, the rules governing action (commonly sanctioned by States), and the legitimate strategies of members of different positions. These understandings are disputed and get progressively shared among actors when the field get established. Once they are in place, they constitute the bases on which certain actors may reproduce their dominance.

While drawing on similar field conceptions, these approaches also have key differences specially due to different conceptions of action. While in Bourdieu’s approach agency is mainly individual, structurally conditioned, and unfolds implicitly, the SAF approach focus on collective and explicitly organized action. In the sections below, the distinction regarding the emergence and interconnection of fields are assessed.

Fields and Their Emergence

Adopted perspectives focus on different aspects of the dynamics of fields. Bourdieu’s work concentrated on demonstrating the validity of his relational approach to overcome the enduring duality of structure and agency in social sciences while studying the legitimation of domination in modern societies. His approach emphasized the tacit and individual aspects of social action, associated to his concepts of habitus and practice. He concentrated in assessing diverse major fields of modern France, commonly based on wide range historical assessments. One of his most important and enduring contributions was the reformulation of the issue of social groups (or classes) and his discovery that these structures kept homological relations with other fields in modern societies (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 2013; Wang, 2016). To demonstrate this, he adopted a formalized analysis of the main forms of power (capital), modeling the fields using relational statistical techniques (Lebaron, 2009).

The SAF approach focuses on the micro situational processes underlying the dynamic of emergence and change. It was developed based on the assessment of more situated fields, in studies of political and economic sociologies, and emphasizes the importance of explicit meaning making for collective action and cooperation. To connect individual and collective dynamics of action, the authors draw on the concept of social skills, defined as the capacity of actors to induce cooperation based on their understanding of different conceptions of interest and identities of actors involved in situations (Fligstein, 2001b). They also integrate the perspectives of resource mobilization, political process, and framing theory of social movement literature to explain change, arguing that the processes theorized in this literature are actually recurrent in social life.

The differences of these approaches have implications to their understanding of the emergence of fields. In Bourdieu’s work, emergence is related to the fashioning of novel autonomous spheres of practice enhanced by broad societal transformations. In his studies about the literary field (Bourdieu, 1988, 1996), for example, he sustains that its genesis was enabled by profound changes
in the social structures in 19th-century France. The affluence of the bourgeoisie and of the economic field enhanced the formation of a publishing business, based on the diffusion of technologies for large scale printing. These transformations opened up opportunities for writers to make a living from their art, dividing the space with aristocrat artists working in the traditional systems of patronage. Not all of this new class of writers succeeded in making a living from selling books and some, especially the late comers, engaged in associated rising professions, such as journalism and editing. Overall, this population of literate people developed a specific lifestyle in the city, which was Bohemian and closer to the elites than to the lower classes because of their valuable cultural resources. Over time, three subgroups with different conceptions of literature consolidated. The bourgeoisie writers, which were the wealthiest ones, saw the activity as highly integrated to markets, with cultural production being subordinated to the expectations of an audience. Engaged writers, the dominated pole with a higher relative composition of cultural resources, defended a conception of art attached to social transformation. There was also an intermediary group with a balanced composition of economic and cultural resources and which defended that art should be an autonomous activity (“art for art’s sake”). This was the group that originated the literary field, inventing the full-time professional writer, indifferent to politics and to money. Baudelaire and Flaubert incarnated the position of this group, which, according to Bourdieu, was never explicitly organized. Their consolidation was based on a symbolic revolution developed mainly by Flaubert who detached from morality and existing literary categories and subjects through the mastering of form. The consolidation of the field depended on the formation of a circuit of consecration that was independent from money and based on peer recognition, forming an upside-down economy, in which only economic sacrifice would lead to artistic consecration.

In the SAF perspective, emergence involves the fashioning of new relations among collective actors. These new relations may be triggered by a number of different factors including demographical and technological shifts, the extent of social organization and state action. New fields are usually formed nearby existing ones, when actors from distinct arenas start to behave strategically vis-a-vis one another in a previously unorganized arena of activity due to some form of exogenous change that enable their sense of opportunity or threat. For the field to become established, the involved actors need to achieve a certain degree of consensus about what the field is about, who is part of it, what the roles and comparative status of these components are, what the rules that govern interaction are, and how the actors in each position should behave. A certain field frame will have to prevail, which will depend on both the power of actors to impose them and on their skills to induce cooperation and create coalitions, enhancing the formation of shared identities, meanings, and conceptions of interest. The created settlements establish how fields routinely operate and are maintained by constant work depending on the creation of Internal Governance Units and on the facilitation of State fields.

Fligstein’s (2001a) analysis of the emergence of the European Common Market illustrates this perspective. The author associates the roots of this initiative with a situation of economic and political crises in the European Union in the 1970s. In this context, the idea of creating a Single Market was put forward by Karl Narjes and other neoliberal commissioners who believed that the only way to escape from the crisis was to expose European companies to more internal competition. The Single Market cultural frame, a vague and appealing idea, was capable of mobilizing and inducing the cooperation of actors from the European Commission, the European Parliament, major industries and national governments, forming a coalition that was able to overcome resistance and to actually change actor’s conceptions of sovereignty.

Accounts on the Interconnection of Fields

Both approaches suggest that the attention to relations among fields is increasingly necessary due to the progressively more specialized dynamics of modern societies. Fligstein and McAdam
(2012) state that the number of SAF is proliferating, generating increasing complexity. Bourdieu claimed that the circuits of legitimation are lengthening and gaining symbolically efficiency with the proliferation of the number of fields, increasing the autonomy of dominants (Bourdieu, 1998).

In Bourdieu’s work, fields have varied levels of autonomy/heteronomy, but are always connected. The most powerful fields, to which he directed his attention, tend to become more autonomous in relation to the others with their dynamics being less influenced by external issues. However, he actually sees modern societies as a myriad of interconnected fields with the formation of arenas dispersing power and dividing the labor of social domination and disrupting what Durkheim called mechanical solidarity (Bourdieu, 2000).

One of his main insights regarding relations among fields is captured by his concept of homology. For him, what Durkheim called “organic solidarity” characterizes modern societies and is based on the existence of forms of symbolic identification among actors occupying similar positions inside different fields and in them in relation to the social space (Bourdieu, 2000; Wang, 2016). He shows that these are “resemblances within differences” in the practices of actors in similar positions in two or more fields that tend to create social bonds among actors of different arenas and generate the convergences among them. Bourdieu (2005), for example, claimed that homologies of position in the fields of the producers and the consumers drive affinities of construction companies and the buyers, as indicated in the following extract:

the match between supply and demand is not the product of the miraculous aggregation of countless miracles achieved by rationally calculating agents capable of making choices best suited to their interests. Contrary to appearances, there is nothing natural or obvious in the fact that the least well-off purchasers find themselves directed towards those companies offering the most basic products, particularly from the aesthetic point of view, while the others gravitate “spontaneously” towards the firms occupying positions within the house producers’ space homologous to their own position in the social space, that is to say, the producers and products best suited to satisfy their taste to comfort, tradition and originality—in a word, their sense of distinction. (p. 72)

As fields have their own point of view (nomos), conceptions of interest (illusio) and forms of capital, which are not evident for external agents, their interrelations involve conflicts, which makes the alliances between actors of different arenas to be “always based on a more or less conscious misunderstanding” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 737). Bourdieu focused his analysis on the conflicts between dominants of different arenas, as captured by his notion of “field of power.”

The issue of the interconnection of fields is raised by the SAF approach, a topic that Fligstein and McAdam (2012) consider to be underexplored. While Bourdieu addresses the issue in a more structural vein, these authors emphasize the interplay of actors and their strategies. In their view, the interrelations of fields may be conceptualized in a similar way to the internal ones, involving only a change in the level of analysis. The relation to other fields is an important source of instability for specific arenas, whereby changes are commonly explained by exogenous shocks.

The connection of fields may occur among arenas in similar or different levels of analysis. In the first case, fields may keep more or less hierarchical relations, depending on the existing asymmetries of power. A production or a supply chain, for example, involves the interconnection of multiple fields, sectors or companies, through market or alliance relations (Candido, Soulé, & Sacomano Neto, 2017). Besides the qualities of the relations between fields, the number of ties with other spaces matters as well, whereby these connections operate as conductors of instability. A field may also contain and comprise other fields, like “Russian dolls.” Power relations among higher and lower order arenas may vary with the whole being able to dominate the parts and the parts also being able to control the whole. In the analysis of an organization as a field, for example, the departments could be considered as subfields and either different specific areas could control the whole or general management control them.
A few empirical studies addressing processes of emergence and change deal with the interconnection of fields in a way that is consistent with the SAF approach. Analyzing why and how environmental activists succeeded in advancing their agenda during North American Free Trade Agreement’s negotiation, while labor movements did not, Evans and Kay (2008) show that environmentalists were able to leverage their advantage across closely connected fields. This capacity to influence nearby arenas was related to their networks across fields and was mediated by their social skill.

In a study about distributed generation of solar power and the transformation of the U.S. electrical system, Hess (2013) examines how activists advocating this solution allied with actors from the information technology and financial sectors to leverage their resources and respond to blockages of incumbent companies from the electricity sector in relation to changes in regulation and policies. As the mobilized power was sufficient to overcome the blockage, incumbent companies from the electricity sector changed their strategies and started to invest in generated distribution.

To sum up, while Bourdieu shows specific insights regarding the operation of social structures across fields, the SAF contribution encourages research on strategic actions across multiple arenas. These differences are consistent with other aspects of their approaches and, in our view, these insights may be cross fertilized. In Table 1, a summary of the combined approaches based on key dimensions is presented.

**Method**

To understand the genesis, diffusion and consecration of “solidarity recycling” in Brazil, a qualitative study was conducted based on the case study approach (Yin, 1994). It involved a
retrospective and longitudinal study ranging from 1985 to 2010 and the investigation of the social history of fields and of actors’ trajectories, following Bourdieu’s prosopographical approach (Barrett, 2015; Broady, 2002). This approach was well suited to answer our question about how cultural–political processes cross-cutting multiple fields unfolded historically, as it involved complex dynamics with fluid and ambiguous boundaries, demanding contexts, contents, and change to be addressed in a unified fashion (Pettigrew, 1990).

The method is appropriate to develop new theoretical insights about how SAF and Bourdieu’s approaches may be complementary to address emergence and to advance in the comprehension of the interconnection of fields. The study involved a historical process that is recent and relatively well defined in time favoring good quality data. It also addressed an extreme case (Eisenhardt, 1989) in two different ways. First, the assessed markets are embedded in the social structures of a highly unequal society (Barros, Carvalho, Franco, & Mendonça, 2010; Souza, 2009, 2010). This led to identifying broad structural influences in the formation and dynamics of the recycling field, more associated to the approach of Bourdieu. Second, the field under analysis is a very heteronomous one, and is subjected to the influence of other arenas, which helped understand the interplay of fields.

Data Collection

Data collection entailed six steps summarized in Figure 1. First, we constructed an outlook of the evolution of the number of solidarity recycling organizations in Brazil (Task 1) based on data provided by SENAES (2007, 2012) and CEMPRE1 (2015). This assessment made it possible to identify the pioneer solidarity recycling organizations and the period in which these endeavors diffused in Brazil.

We then focused on understanding the trajectory of these initiatives, looking for secondary data about their formation process, the actors participating in it, the fields they were inserted into, the meanings of these experiences, the power relations involved, among other points suggested by the reflexive application of the theoretical lenses (Task 2). We benefited particularly from case studies that documented the origins and history of these iconic organizations of solidarity recycling. These also made it possible to identify the influence of actors from different fields in the
genesis of solidarity recycling. To understand the context in which these actors were encouraged to promote solidarity recycling, we reviewed specialized literature that addressed the structure and dynamics of the nearby fields, identifying the positions of actors influencing recycling (Task 3).

Based on secondary data about the trajectories of organizations established in the period of diffusion, we were also able to understand the actors and arenas influencing the sharp increase in the number of recycling cooperatives since the end of the 1990s (Task 2). Academic case studies about organizations established in the period were again useful. From them, we traced the main forces influencing the phenomenon and sought other data to understand the adjacent fields and how their contexts influenced actors to engage with solidarity recycling (Task 3). It can be observed, for example, that many cooperatives were set up with the support of city administrations when dumps were banned from cities. The understanding of the interference of these multiple arenas was again decisive for making sense of the case.

Attention given to State fields was key throughout our analysis. To show the specific involvement of certain local and federal governments with the assessed recycling model, their main actions supporting it were mapped out based on official reports and data. Attention to actions carried out by the federal government was particularly significant in terms of understanding what we called the consecration of solidarity recycling. We addressed it by analyzing its influence and the role of actors from other fields in the approval of the National solid waste policy emphasizing the social inclusion of waste collectors (Task 4). To do so, institutional reports of organizations involved in lobbying and news from the media were assessed.

The overall secondary data gathering process consisted of assessing a total of 132 documents (totalizing 6,378 pages) and 33 institutional websites referring to actors from diverse arenas. A preliminary assessment of this secondary data indicated some blind spots and ambiguities, which we covered collecting primary data via in-depth interviews with key actors (Task 5) and observer participation in an event related to solidarity recycling (Task 6).

A total of 14 in-depth semistructured interviews, lasting on average approximately 1½ hours each, were conducted. The actors and organizations to be interviewed were defined based on previously identifying their participation or understanding of the national process and/or their potential to provide specific information to fill the gaps identified and confirm the interpretations produced based on preliminary assessments. They included a coordinator from the National movement of waste collectors, three leaders of cooperatives, three professors coordinating incubators of grassroots solidarity organizations from key universities, two public technicians responsible for municipal solid waste management, one technician from a consulting company specialized in solid waste management, two coordinators from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and two owners of intermediary companies which commercialize recyclable materials, involving representatives of most fields. While the interviews focused on the state of Sao Paulo (10 of them were carried out in Sao Paulo, 2 in Pernambuco, and 2 in Brasilia), the informants had a broader understanding and insertion in the process occurring at a national level.

Complementary data were also collected by observant participation at an event about reverse logistics for recycling organized by the Brazilian Association of Logistics, which took place in Sao Paulo, over 2 days in May 2014, and involved state and municipal public authorities, waste collectors’ solidarity economy organizations, social movements, and recycling companies. The robustness of the data were put to the test using triangulation techniques (Yin, 1994) comparing data from various sources and trying to avoid interpretation biases.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis involved a more comprehensive assessment of our corpus grounded in theoretical approaches used. It followed two steps developed consistently with the process study approach...
(Langley, 1999) involving the production of narratives in which events were configured temporally and meaningfully to contribute to a specific outcome. As discussed by Polkinghorne (1995), the analysis of data through narratives may be carried out based on two different approaches. The one called the paradigmatic strategy, consists of identifying and separating categories involved in the collected data. The second, called the narrative approach of eventful data, focuses on processes and events in which the researcher configures disconnected data elements in a coherent dynamic way creating a story that connects the data maintaining its complexity and contributing to an explanatory purpose. We adopted the second approach, which is appropriate to answer our “how did it happen” question and is consistent with the ethnographic vein of the research. The idea of field was used specifically to draw the multiple boundaries of the assessed case, which is necessary in this form of data assessment (Polkinghorne, 1995).

The construction of a narrative followed a twofold procedure. A first rough narrative with around 30,000 words was first drawn up addressing our view about the emergence of solidarity recycling and a first division of time brackets. Assessing this manageable and carefully organized amount of data, we reengaged with the theory to construct a more consistent and concise narrative. In this process, we reflected on how our case could also problematize the adopted theoretical approaches, which led us to gaining new insights and resulted in the narrative presented in the following sections.

Findings: The Genesis, Diffusion, and Consecration of “Solidary Recycling”

The resulting narrative is divided into three main parts, in which the origins, spread, and legitimation of solidary recycling are assessed. However, before presenting them, the social structures of Brazilian society should be addressed and how they enabled the emergence process analyzed.

Recyclable Waste Collection and Inequalities in Brazil

An assessment of Brazilian recycling should not take informal waste collectors for granted, as is common in the country’s daily life. Bourdieu offers a consistent approach to understanding how broad social inequalities influence and are influenced by the configuration of specific markets and economic practices embedded in them. His relational view of social groups (or classes), considered as one of his most important and enduring contributions to sociology, is specifically useful to our assessment.

In his view, modern societies comprise multiple social groups based on the relative distribution not just of economic capital, as in the Marxian conception of class, but also on cultural resources (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 2013). This distribution of scarce resources, as well as existing inequalities, define social positions, which are directly related to the group members’ lifestyles and tastes and influence structural affinities and oppositions among classes. The structure of the social space is the result of struggles occurring in several fields, but it also shapes the structure of specific arenas, with which it keeps homological relations. The relations among different fields are also interconnected to existing divisions in the social space.

Bourdieu’s conceptualization of the relations of the social space of a country with the dynamics of specific fields is especially important for a case such as the one discussed, in which stark social inequalities decisively influence socioeconomic relations. The supply of the recycling industry in the country is maintained by a massive amount of unprivileged workers making their living out of selling materials collected from streets and dumps. The exact number of recyclable waste collectors in the country is unknown, but the federal government estimates that between 400 and 600 thousand people are involved in the activity (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica
Waste collectors are part of the lowest groups of Brazilian society and are characterized by a huge lack of legitimate forms of knowledge (cultural capital). In recent studies inspired by Bourdieu’s approach to social groups, Souza (2009, 2010) showed that these groups fail to incorporate basic forms of useful knowledge, as well as emotional and moral conditions required to be part of societies dominated by markets and states. Among these fundamental abilities, which are commonly considered in what Bourdieu calls habitus and are exercised as a prereflective capacity, Souza (2009) cites self-control, discipline, the ability to concentrate, and prospective thinking. A lack of them is reproduced throughout generations of these families, as children follow the role models provided by parents and are inclined to not succeed in school, often considering that studying “is not for them.” This tends to create persistent incongruences between basic incorporated dispositions (habitus) and external societal structures (fields) and also leads to severe survival difficulties.

The members of this group are not homogeneous but also comprise a field themselves organized with dominant and dominated poles. People making a living out of informally collecting recyclable materials in Brazil comprise the dominated group of the dominated field. They face enormous barriers to participate in formal labor markets and consider waste collection as an “emergency exit” (Cabanes & Souza, 2011) to make their living honestly. This is enhanced by boundaries separating them from the “delinquents” of the lowest class fractions. Nevertheless, it involves working with what society considers to be “dirty,” opposing the modern conception of hygiene and implying strong stigmatization and “exclusion” (Douglas, 1966).

Over the past decades, with the rise of environmentalism, cultural sensibilities concerning waste collection have changed and these workers have started to be increasingly seen as providers of important “environmental services.” Together with the Brazilian process of redemocratization, this cultural shift has influenced the growing attention of social activists, governments, and other segments of Brazilian society to their precarious situation. As a result, new relations and alliances have been established with these workers and other social groups aiming to support them, which has helped the rise of “solidarity recycling.” In the following section, the genesis of these cooperatives and waste collector associations are presented.

The Genesis of Solidarity Recycling: Environmentalism, the Catholic Church and Pioneer Waste Collector Organizations

The origins of solidarity recycling can be traced back to the early 1980s. In the first half of this decade, Brazil experienced a moment of social upheaval. The authoritarian regime was in crisis and the country started its transition to democracy. This situation of instability was an important source of political opportunities, enabling the rise of different social movements that were engaged in defeating dictatorship. The macro processes which took place over this decade enabled the affluence of two movements that are key to understanding the studied process.

The first is the environmental movement. As argued by Alonso, Costa, and Maciel (2007), the rise of environmentalism in Brazil is related to this national conjuncture and also to the consolidation of an international environmental agenda. These enabled the mobilization of groups framing environmental issues according to more conservationist (protectionism) or social–environmentalist views. Their study shows that an environmental field emerged when these two groups formed a coalition to develop their interests influencing the new constitution, promulgated in the early 1990s, and through the Brazilian participation in Rio-92. This alliance and the formation of common frames made the formation of a National environmental field possible with the social–environmental view prevailing.
While the rise of environmentalism was certainly of great importance to the genesis of solidarity recycling, environmental groups had scarce direct participation in the process. Instead, organizations from the Catholic Church became involved in supporting waste collectors in the 1980s, which may be associated with the historical moment of this organization in Brazil. Various studies show that from the 1950s onward, progressive branches advocating an “approximation with the people” and engagement in social activism to build the “kingdom of God on Earth” was strengthened in the Brazilian Church (Bruneau, 1974; Neuhouser, 1989). This happened in a context in which the long-term alliance with the state weakened and many changes threatened its prevalence in the religious field of the country (Bruneau, 1974). The creation of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), in 1952, reorganized the Church’s governance structure and was important in terms of extending the influence of progressive Bishops, especially the ones from the northeast region of Brazil (I. S. Costa, 2014). As a result of progressive groups rising, new interpretations of the gospels gained force, among which Liberation Theology became the most radical (Boff, 1984; Gutierrez, 1973).

In order to approach the people, one of the main strategies adopted was to help set up Grassroots Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) and promote their engagement in local, social, and political projects. To support combating poverty, segments of this church also started to promote Alternative Community Projects with the financial support of national and international funds, such as the one managed by Caritas (Bertucci & da Silva, 2003). Unlike the traditional view of “charity,” much of this social activism was oriented to the “emancipation” of the poor through their own organization and generation of economic opportunities (Bertucci & da Silva, 2003).

Based on this approach and stimulated by the structure of political opportunity from the 1980s and the rise of environmentalism, Catholic organizations supported pioneer projects aiming at organizing collective enterprises of waste collectors including three initiatives in State capitals of Brazil. In Porto Alegre (the capital of Rio Grande do Sul), the Association of Materials Collectors of Porto Alegre was created in 1986 with the support of an ecclesial community (Martins, 2003). In São Paulo, a group of oblates of Saint Benedict helped found an association of paper collectors in the 1980s with the support of the Organization of Fraternal Aid, which resulted in the Autonomous Collectors of Paper, Cardboard, Shavings, and Reusable Materials Cooperative in 1989 (D. L. R. Costa, 2007; Domingues, 2003). In 1990, the Collectors of Paper, Cardboard, and Reusable Materials Association was created with the support of a CEB helping people living on the streets of the archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais (Dias, 2009; Pereira, 2011).

In all cases, the organization of cooperatives was a strategy to reduce the dependence of waste collectors in relation to intermediaries of recycling chains, promoting their autonomy by means of collective and democratic organization of work. These experiences were also supported by the municipal administrations of these cities, especially the ones of the Workers’ Party, which recognized the cooperatives as part of the official solid waste management service and made them the base of some of the first municipal recycling programs in Brazil (Pereira & Teixeira, 2011).

During the 1990s, progressive groups of the Catholic Church kept stimulating the articulation of cooperatives of waste collectors and supported the establishment of a national social movement organization of waste collectors. Dias (2009) traced these articulations to the foundation in 1992, of the National Forum for Studies of Homeless Population. The initial focus of this group was gradually deviated to recycling, as these two categories strongly overlapped. As a result, in 2001, the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Materials was established in Brasília with the participation of 1,500 workers and 200 supporting organizations (Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis/National Movement of Waste Collectors [MNCR], 2014).
The Spread of Solidarity Recycling: Professionalization of the Solid Waste Field, UNICEF Against Child Labor in Dumps, and the Theorization of Solidarity Economy

The emergence of collectors’ movements and cooperatives is also related to other initiatives that deal with the situation of collectors of recyclable materials working in dumps. Since the 1980s and due to the rise in environmentalism, solid waste disposal practices in Brazil have been increasingly rationalized, leading to a gradual substitution of dumps by sanitary landfills. While in 1989, 88.2% of cities deposited their waste in dumps and only 1.1% in landfills in 2008, these percentages shifted to 50.5% and 27.7%, respectively (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2010; Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, 2012).

Establishing safety and health norms restricted the access of waste collectors to the dumps, challenging city administrations all over the country to deal with the workers who made their living out of garbage and directing public attention to their precarious livelihoods. In this context, the pioneer experiences of the waste collectors’ organizations from Porto Alegre, São Paulo, and Belo Horizonte became important references to deal with the issue (Dias, 2009). The establishment of cooperatives and solidarity recycling programs was appealing to city governments, as they were a relatively low-cost solution that could be justified in economic, environmental and social terms. This favored the diffusion of solidarity recycling programs since the mid-1990s all over Brazil and, as a result, in 2008, from 653 municipal recycling programs in Brazil, 445 (68.2%) were developed in partnership with associations or cooperatives of collectors of recyclable materials (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2010).

This diffusion was also influenced by the support of organizations engaged in defeating child labor in dumps. Led by Agop Kayayan, the branch of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Brazil identified and decided to address the common occurrence of child labor in dumps in a National campaign of this international organization called “No more children in the garbage.”12 As Kayayan personally got to know the experiences of the waste collector cooperatives and the municipal recycling program developed in Belo Horizonte, the campaign welcomed the solution to create grassroots economic organizations as a form to support families working in dumps (Dias, 2009). Using its connections with important NGOs in the country, UNICEF also articulated a national forum called Garbage and Citizenship13 in 1999 to discuss solutions concerning this topic. Nineteen organizations took part and this expanded in the following years, increasing to 42 in 2002. Forums at state and municipal levels were also organized and, in 2004, 23 state-level forums were established (Dias, 2009). These spaces connected NGOs, Catholic Church groups, professional associations, representatives from the Public Ministry and public banks which financed the construction of sanitary landfills, among other actors involved in initiatives to socially include families living in the dumps. The member organizations of the National forum also strongly supported the foundation of the MNCR in 2001 (MNCR, 2014).

The dissemination of solidarity recycling was also enhanced by academics from important Brazilian universities, who became involved in theorizing and supporting the experiences. This involvement can be traced back to a National campaign against hunger proposed in 1991 by the Parallel Government of the Workers’ Party14 and developed by the former President Itamar Franco in 1993. Herbert de Souza, an important leader of social movements involved in the impeachment of the former President Fernando Collor de Melo, was invited to coordinate the program and mobilized the Catholic Church and several other civil society organizations to join the campaign (Lechat, 2004).15 In 1995, a group of scholars from the Alberto Luiz Coimbra Institute of Graduate Studies and Engineering Research at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro became involved in the campaign and other social projects in Rio de Janeiro, creating a business incubator of grassroots cooperatives aiming to promote the economic organization and “emancipation” of the “excluded.” The idea served as the basis for establishing the National
Program of Incubation of Grassroots Cooperatives (PRONINC)\(^\text{16}\) in 1997 by the federal government (Singer, 2006). As a result, in 2010, there were 80 incubators of this type spread around universities all over the country (Almeida, Mello, & Etzkowitz, 2012).

In 1999, the network of incubators was incorporated into the Unitrabalho program, an association formed by representatives from about 80 universities and the Unified Workers Central,\(^\text{17}\) established to articulate the demands of worker unions with the higher education system in Brazil.\(^\text{18}\) In a program called Solidarity Economy,\(^\text{19}\) Unitrabalho joined scholars from some of the most important universities in the country researching and supporting the organization of self-managed cooperatives operating in different contexts, including recycling.

All of these experiences started to be increasingly theorized and shortly became a new scholarly arena. The framing and theorization of the “solidarity economy” created common references to grassroots cooperatives and other self-managed groups, including the recycling ones, enhancing the internal coherence of these experiences and contributing to legitimating them from a technical perspective. The topic was embraced by heterodox scholars from a wide range of areas, who commonly built on the Marxian labor process theory and principles of utopian and democratic socialist beliefs (Singer, 2006). As a result, the number of published papers and dissertations addressing the topic raised from none in 1990 to more than 200 in 2014 (Periódicos CAPES, 2015).\(^\text{20}\) Only a modest part of these publications were peer-reviewed journals, indicating a marginalized presence in the academic field.

The National Policy of Solid Waste Management and the Consecration of Solidarity Recycling

In 2001, organizations participating in the Garbage and Citizenship Forums and the recently created MNCR became involved in the construction of the National solid waste law, which was being discussed in Parliament. These groups demanded that the role of waste collectors in recycling should be recognized and that the support of solidarity recycling organizations should be established as a priority. They also defended the abandonment of the “producer extended responsibility” principle. The solidarity recycling lobby considered that making producers accountable for the waste they produced was contrary to the waste collectors’ interests, since it would force companies to reduce waste and structure their own reverse logistic systems, threatening their niche (Grimberg, 2007).

This position of the solidarity recycling movement converged with the one of the consumer goods industry, especially companies with an intensive use of disposable packs (e.g., beverage industry), represented by CEMPRE. As a result, CEMPRE and the incumbent companies associated to it (e.g., Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, AMBEV, BRF, Nestlé, McDonalds, Johnson) became one of the main supporters and promoters of the “Brazilian model of recycling,” promoting it as a way to combine environmental conservation with the social inclusion of collectors. The organization engaged in advertising solidarity recycling and even in exporting the solution to other developing countries (CEMPRE, 2011). They also committed to financially and technically supporting solidarity recycling organizations, broadly advertising their actions of “social responsibility.”

The chances of the solidarity recycling movement shaping the new regulation improved when Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was elected and reelected as President in 2002 and 2006. During Lula’s mandates, the government developed several initiatives to promote solidarity recycling. The activity of waste collectors was included in the National code of professions, in 2002, and established an Interministerial committee for social and economic inclusion of collectors of recyclable waste in 2003. This committee coordinated the efforts from the government to support the category, engaging public organizations such as Petrobras, Bank of Brazil, National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), National Health Foundation (FUNASA), and Brazilian Micro and Small Companies Support Service (SEBRAE) in actions to support
solidarity recycling organizations. In 2006 and 2007, respectively, the government passed two acts to support cooperatives. The first created the recycling program of the Federal Public Administration, defining that all its organizations must direct their recyclable material to cooperatives. The second defined that cities were able to hire waste collectors from recycling organizations without public tender. Lula personally engaged in symbolic actions to empower waste collectors transforming this group into a symbol of the social engagement of the government. At the end of every year during his mandates, for example, he celebrated Christmas with members of the MNCR.

Having strong support from Lula’s government, the solid waste act was approved in 2010. It defined the “social inclusion” of collectors of recyclable materials and the ambiguous concept of “shared responsibility” for waste management as its guiding principles, and was considered a great victory for solidarity recycling supporters.

Discussion: Convergences and Strategies in Solidarity Recycling

It is difficult to hide the influence of broad social inequalities in such an extreme case as the Brazilian recycling markets. However, these are not the only markets in which these societal power distributions matter to the sociological assessment of economic and organizational dynamics and scholars have a lot to do in this area. To address the issue, we engaged with the relational approach to social groups proposed by Bourdieu and benefited from the analysis of Souza (2009, 2010) of the Brazilian social structure.

On these grounds, the existence of homological relations among the configuration of the Brazilian social space and the structures of specific fields may be assessed. These resemblances within differences explain why for a large contingent of people from the lowest segments of Brazilian society it is reasonable to engage in the “dirty work” of informal collection of recovered materials. Their cheap labor ensures the supply of recycling industries, making it a profitable business for members of better positioned groups and enabling the reproduction of social inequalities. They also explain why and how Brazil is a major recycler of certain materials.

While these societal structures may be addressed using the SAF approach, this perspective does not emphasize the importance of overall power distribution in society. It does not show a clear view about the structure of social groups and how they influence the dynamic of lower order fields. Moreover, one of the key dynamics in Bourdieu’s view on the issue, captured by the idea of the existence of homological relations between the social space and specific fields, does not have any parallel in Fligstein and McAdam’s (2012) work.

On the other hand, the SAF approach brought to our attention the explicit micro processes within and across fields and how in some circumstances of change and strategic interplay the representation of actors may become relatively decoupled from the actual spaces of relative objective positions. Instead of being “only” a mechanism of symbolic domination, the creation of totalizing representations about reality or possible realities was also considered as an important way to enhance collective action and transform the configuration of fields. This understanding was also useful to understand how improbable alliances were forged.

The attention to the interconnection of fields, encouraged by the approach, was particularly relevant in our case, as it addressed the emergence of a very heteronomous arena. Several arenas influencing the studied processes were identified and are represented in the following figures. They schematically detail the relations of fields and subfields with different resource endowments in the genesis, diffusion and consecration of solidarity recycling.21 Collecting and assessing data to take into account the dynamics of such different fields was a great challenge, forcing us to transpose symbolic boundaries strictly established in academic and “real” life reasoning. Apart from these challenges, we consider this an important effort for organizational scholars, as the number of specialized arenas comprising contemporary societies appears to multiply
Candido et al. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) and processes of legitimation increasingly depend on their integration (Bourdieu, 2000).

As suggested by both approaches, the emergence of the new arena involved the constitution of new relations among actors based on their interpretations of opportunities and threats enabled by broader changes. The transformations which took place in Brazilian politics with the transition to a democratic regime in the 1980s generated a sense of opportunity for challenger actors from the Catholic Church, who were encouraged to support the dominated of the solid waste fields. The rise of environmentalism in Brazil also reinforced and justified this engagement to support waste collectors. These religious activists allied with progressive municipal governments elected at the time, especially the ones from the recently established and heterodox Workers’ Party, generating pioneer solidarity recycling experiences. These new interfield relations established in the genesis of solidarity recycling are illustrated in Figure 2.

During the 1990s, actors from other fields came onto the scene, as highlighted in green in Figure 3, influencing the diffusion of solidarity recycling. Changes in the dynamics of the official solid waste industry resulting from the influence of environmentalism generated an exogenous shock in the activities of waste collectors working in dumps. New bureaucratic norms regarding landfills involved health and safety measures which conflicted with the reality of families making their living out of the dumps, tending to deprive them even from the garbage piles.

This harsh situation mobilized actors from a host of fields who found the pioneer experiences of solidarity recycling appealing. They were embedded into arenas and their commitment to support solidarity recycling should be understood as part of the interest of the social games in which they participated. Supporting the poor was seen as a condition of redemption for actors of the progressive branches of the religious field. For UNICEF, it was a way to defeat child labor on a national scale, and for NGOs, an opportunity to develop new social and environmental projects, raise funds, and maintain and improve their structure. For critical scholars, recycling cooperatives were important for constructing spaces of resistance to capitalism. For many municipal governments, it was a reasonable way to address pressures for environmental action and social inclusion at a low cost. For the Workers’ Party, it was a way to commit with their supporters and demonstrate their political will to defeat poverty. For the powerful multinationals associated at

Figure 2. Relations among fields involved in the genesis of "solidarity recycling."
CEMPRE, it was a way to reduce costs and to shirk responsibility concerning their packaging waste.

This diffusion process was produced by convergences of worldviews and interests of actors from the different fields. As Bourdieu’s approach would suggest, they are related to the existence of homologies among actors from these different arenas. Most actors involved were challengers in their fields and were committed to heterodox recycling practices. These correspondences of their position and practical orientations generated convergences that account for most alliances and make them intuitive. In these cases, it is less a matter of the existence of resource dependence and the actors’ pragmatic behavior and more the effects of identification and solidarity driven by similarities in positions that explain establishing ties. As the idea of resource dependencies is focused on dyads, involving an interactional view of power (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003), it does not capture the “similarities within differences” accounted by homologies, which refer the relative distribution of power in different fields and the symbolic resemblances they generate. The SAF approach has little to say regarding the mechanisms driving these kinds of alliances.

Something striking in this case is the enormous dependence on waste collectors on the support of challenging actors from other fields to advance their interests. This is related to their social condition and lack of resources, which makes them dependent on the willingness of supporters. These supporters are commonly challengers in their fields, which make them to identify the struggles of collectors to their own. It may also be related to what Bourdieu (1998) calls the lengthening of circuits of legitimation and Fligstein and McAdam (2012) account as the increasing interconnection of fields. While these transformations tend to increase the efficiency of symbolic domination, they also enhance conversions of capitals from one field to another and subversive misappropriations (Bourdieu, 1998). When supporters from different fields offer their resources to support waste collectors, they may give them power to construct the symbolic order. For this to happen, supporters should avoid imposing their views on those of the people they support.

Yet, in some cases, convergences are more of a misunderstanding than in others. The alliances of solidarity recycling activists with consumer goods companies organized in CEMPRE and with right wing municipal governments, which can also be seen in Figure 3, for example, were more

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**Figure 3.** Relations among fields involved in the diffusion of solidarity recycling.

*Note.* UNICEF = United Nations Children’s Fund; NGO = nongovernmental organization.
pragmatic, involving a great deal of ambiguity and contradiction. These would be regarded as highly improbable, but not impossible, according to Bourdieu’s approach. Nevertheless, from a more pragmatic standpoint, it was possible to understand how they emerged. In some practical situations, the existence of resource dependencies between fields may induce a very reflexive and strategic positioning of actors. The formation of these coalitions demand the broader and structural differences to be left aside, forming a contradictory arrangement that actually enables collective strategic action.

Therefore, while structural issues are definitely important, our case involved a great deal of strategic action. The establishment of the Garbage and Citizenship Forums were key in creating the alliances that produced the diffusion of solidarity recycling. These arenas spread over the country and gathered powerful actors, as public prosecutors, politicians, and banks financing landfills, co-opting them to deal with the precarious situation of families expelled from dumps. UNICEF led this process, using its resources and skills to induce coalition formation. Despite these spaces, the creation of solidarity recycling organizations became a legitimate form to deal with the issue of closing dumps, which favored its spread over the nation.

The interaction on these forums is also important in terms of creating a governance unit for solidarity recycling and for the consecration of the model by the State, which, according to the SAF approach is key to the settlement of a field. In them, the creation of the MNCR was articulated. This organization became the legitimate representative of waste collectors and, with the help of its supporters, influenced the construction of the National solid waste policy. The incorporation of the model in the National law was possible especially due to the support of two powerful groups of actors. The first was Lula’s government, which invested a large amount of material and symbolic resources to make solidarity recycling work, which is consistent with the way these governments are symbolically positioned in the political arena. The ambiguous and contradictory support of CEMPRE to this heterodox recycling model was also decisive. In this case, it is hard to believe that companies are interested in anything different than avoiding paying for the damage caused by their packaging to the environment. The relations involved in the consecration of solidarity recycling are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Relations among fields involved in the consecration of solidarity recycling.
Note. UNICEF = United Nations Children’s Fund; NGO = nongovernmental organization.
The advantages of powerful actors in shaping sustainable practices indicate some limits of solidarity recycling as a way to promote social justice in Brazil. At the end of the day, solidarity recycling remained a very dependent field and waste collectors are kept in a fragile position. The support from incumbent actors from powerful fields for solidarity recycling does not mean they take it seriously. In most cases, cooperatives are still seen by municipal governments only as a convenient and low-cost solution, receiving very scarce public resources, especially if compared with the values city administrations pay for solid waste management companies. Moreover, while companies, such as the ones participating at CEMPRE, normally offer minor support for cooperatives, they spend millions on advertising to publicize their corporate social responsibility practices involving waste collectors. Furthermore, the approval of the National solid waste policy and the increasing importance of recycling also pose the question if it may not become too important to be left to organizations self-managed by unprivileged social groups of Brazilian society. Thus, a possible threat for collectors is associated to the emergence of waste-to-energy practices, endorsed by the National policy of solid waste, similarly to what happened in the United States decades ago (Incineração Não, 2013; Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003).

Contributions and Final Remarks

Empirically, the study developed a comprehensive historical account of the emergence of solidarity recycling in Brazil. Drawing on field approaches and emphasizing the cultural–political relations enabling this process, it was possible to integrate the current fragmented understandings and tell the “whole story” about the configuration of this arena in Brazil. By doing so, we also contributed to understanding sustainable transitions. In some contexts, which are relatively common in developing countries, business sustainability involves a complex interplay of social, environmental, and economic categories. The constitution of “sustainable” solutions is an inherently ambiguous process disputed and negotiated by actors that might be inserted into multiple games, in multiple positions and have diverse resources, views, and interests. Their views and interests may be more or less compatible, depending on the existent level of structural convergences among multiple spheres of action. Negotiations tend to be more complicated, ambiguous, and difficult to sustain, demanding more social skills of actors, when the positions of actors across the multiple fields diverge. Actors in powerful positions in powerful fields will have significant advantages in shaping the form and the meanings attached to sustainable practices.

Conceptually, our assessment contributed to improving the understanding about field emergence by accounting for the interconnection of fields and cross fertilizing Bourdieu’s and SAF approaches. We demonstrated through an empirical case that the emphasis on tacit structural convergences influenced by homologies of relative positions of the first and the attention to situated and explicit collective action of the second can be used in a complementary way to understand how emergence processes unfold across multiple fields. Our case assessment contributed to elucidating conceptual affinities which have been the object of debate, demonstrating practically that the dynamics emphasized by both approaches are complementary and yield an understanding that is more fertile than either of the perspectives considered separately and that is not restricted to our specific case.

The study specifically contributed to showing the relevance of building our research objects as an ensemble of interconnected fields, an issue that has been underexplored and that is increasingly important to address the increasing specialization and dynamicity of contemporary societies. While these interconnections are fundamental for assessing marginal social arenas and practices, as they tend to be more susceptible to external influence, its utility is quite broad in scope, as no field has complete autonomy. Despite the challenges of collecting extensive amounts of data from several different contexts, which may have limited our possibilities of presenting more vivid details in our narrative and to have a more formalized and structured assessment of
the differential distribution of resources in each field, we believe to have demonstrated how this form of using the concept may provide more accurate accounts of organizational and economic dynamics.

The theoretical approaches used provided the guidance for the assessment, enabling reflexivity and generating consistent and reliable results. Nevertheless, we consider that they also had some blind spots. Emphasizing processes and relations, field theories tend to overlook institutional structures that crosscut and are enacted in different fields. As a result, little attention was directed to the content of major logics directly influencing the emergence of “solidarity recycling.” Given this limitation, one relevant avenue for future research is to address how certain logics attached to major fields may be operated and combined in the practices and discourses of actors in different positions of lower order arenas. One way of doing that is by integrating field theories with other influential contemporary perspectives, as the pragmatic sociology ofcritic (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) and the institutional logics approach (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012).

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Notes
1. CEMPRE is an association consisting of major multinational companies engaged in stimulating recycling in Brazil and that keeps a public register of cooperatives on their website. The organization was formed during Eco-92 and, as described in the article, is an important actor of our case.
2. Conferência Nacional de Bispos do Brasil.
3. Comunidades Eclesiais de Base.
4. Projetos Comunitários Alternativos.
5. Associação de Catadores de Materiais de Porto Alegre.
6. COOPMARE—Cooperativa dos Catadores Autônomos de Papel, Papelão, Aparas e Materiais Reaproveitáveis.
7. ASMARE—Associação dos Catadores de Papel, Papelão e Material Reaproveitável.
8. Waste collectors commonly supplied scrap yards which operate as intermediaries between them and industries demanding the material. Traders commonly had few resources in comparison with most industries to which they sell their products, but tended to be better off than the individual waste collectors, keeping very hierarchical relationships with them. In some cases, asymmetrical relations make it possible for the scrap yard owners to have a high degree of control over the collectors’ work dividing territories among collectors, establishing rules, and punishing their undesirable conduct in order to
ensure control and stability of the supply. The price paid by the recyclable materials is also usually established by the intermediaries.

9. Partido dos Trabalhadores—PT.
10. Fórum Nacional de Estudos de População de Rua.
11. Movimento Nacional de Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis.
12. Criança no Lixo Nunca Mais.
13. Lixo e Cidadania.
14. The Parallel Government of the Workers’ Party was formed in reaction to the election of Fernando Collor de Melo with the purpose of monitoring and presenting projects in line with the “interests of the people” to the elected government. The national campaign against hunger was part of the “National Policy of Food Safety” presented to Itamar Franco, the vice president who substituted Fernando Collor de Melo after he was impeached.
15. Herbert de Souza (also known as Betinho) was a sociologist and founder of the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE—Instituto Brasileiro de Análise Social e Econômica) and a historical activist of the progressive Catholic Church and of Grassroots Action (AP—Ação Popular), a social movement organization in favor of a humanistic and democratic socialism established in 1963 that engaged against the military regime.
17. Central Única dos Trabalhadores—CUT.
18. CUT was established in 1983 and is historically associated to the “new unionism” led by Lula, which broke with the “old” one, in which Unions were more dependent on the Ministry of Labor and the Federal Government. Its genesis is also very associated to the Workers Party.
19. Economia Solidária.
20. Periódicos CAPES is a database maintained by the Brazilian Government compiling National and International databases. It includes dissertations defended in Brazil and is representative of the National academic production.
21. The size of the circles representing the fields is a simplified representation of the relative resource endowments of each arena. For a more accurate representation of the power of each space, estimations regarding their positions in the field of power would be necessary.

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